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MY FIRST SEVENTY YEARS

BY SISTER M. MADELEVA, C.S.C.

THE VANISHING ISLAND

BY CHARLES C. O'CONNELL

THE FAMILY AND THE CROSS

BY JOSEPH A. BREIG
Illustrated by Margaret Goldsmith

THREE WHO VENTURED

BY MYLES CONNOLLY
An Excerpt

CATHOLIC FAMILY BOOK CLUB
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My First Seventy Years

by Sister M. Madeleva, C.S.C.

One of the best-known, best-loved nuns of our time shares with us her *first* seventy years, full of all the famous people and places that have made her life so rich. Here, within the compass of one nun's experience, is a lively picture of American Catholicism today and yesterday. 5

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by Charles C. O'Connell

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Sister M. Madeleva, C.S.C.

MY FIRST SEVENTY YEARS

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✠ Leo A. Pursley
Bishop of Fort Wayne

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To
Our School of Sacred Theology
Teachers and Students
God's Gift to Us

For their kindness
in reading my manuscript
and permitting its publication
I wish to thank
Mother Mary Clare, our Provincial
and
Mother Kathryn Marie, our
Superior General

Preface

IT HAS always interested me to observe the variety of titles under which authors expose their lives in print. It would be more interesting to explore further possibilities in this very old and fascinating form of self-revelation. Sister Madeleva has made no attempt to find a clever and "catchy" name for her story. Betraying none of the usual reluctance of ladies to tell their age, she calls it simply, MY FIRST SEVENTY YEARS, implying thereby that there will be more, as indeed there will be. The thoughtful religious mind is never far from the vision and intimation of things beyond mere time. Then, too, nuns do not grow old as other people do. Something in their vocation, their habit and their habits, keeps them young.

This note of youthful vitality, awareness, exhilaration, runs steadily through Sister Madeleva's account of her busy life, so well divided and yet somehow united by the elements that give it its character and its completion: the application of the student and teacher, the absorption of the creative artist, the decisive action of the administrator. She brings to the telling of her story the woman's fine instinct for significant and colorful detail, the poet's rare sense of beauty and the inner meaning of human experience, what the eye sees, the mind contemplates, the heart embraces.

Here is a record of early midwestern Americana in delightful recollections of childhood and adolescence; a travelogue of journeys and sojourns abroad in which the author's own rich cultural background invests every scene with its authentic charm and makes the reader feel that he, too, is there; a catalogue of arresting names in contemporary literature known and admired perceptively for their work, but presented as "people" with a familiar touch that gives us a taste of their quality; adventures into new fields of learning which called for a strong, independent mind, an enterprising spirit and no small degree of perseverance, reflections on education in general and observations on the education of women in particular which are sometimes incisive, often penetrating and always sound and constructive.

It is expected that much of Sister Madeleva's book should be concerned

with Saint Mary's College, of which she has been an intimate part as student and teacher, in the development of which she has been an important factor, a leading actor, as President through twenty-five years of progress—the kind of progress that is not measured entirely by expanded facilities and increased enrollment, though there are now impressive evidences of both. These chapters will awaken nostalgic memories among thousands of devoted alumnae; but they will interest others no less, if for less personal reasons, simply as the picture of a courageous college struggling against odds to achieve its ideals and moving forward under enlightened leadership toward their fuller realization.

Sister Madeleva is quick to assure us that she has not written here a spiritual treatise. I have no doubt that she could do so. The depth of her own religious life is implicit on every page. At a time when a few nuns have attracted public attention by articulating their personal problems in print, it is refreshing to know well one of the many who meet their adjustment difficulties without any overpowering temptation to "leap over the wall." In the case of Sister Madeleva a great many people are thankful for that.

✠ Leo A. Pursley
Bishop of Fort Wayne

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Dear Readers

you may find this book disappointing. The chronicle of my threescore years and ten is not a story of a nun on her *prie-dieu*. It does not move in an atmosphere of pink and blue devotions. It is quite free from devout aspirations. Aspiration and inspiration may be implicit. I hope that they are.

The life of every religious is set in a well balanced framework, the order of the day. Within such a plan, as constant and regular as the days of the week and the months of the year, I have lived for the past fifty years. My every day from 5:00 or 5:30 in the morning until 9:00 or 10:00 at night has included: morning and evening prayers, meditation, Holy Mass, Office chanted three times a day, spiritual reading, vocal prayers. Monthly and annual retreats have led me into rich spiritual oases. In fifty years you may be sure that regularity in this régime has been realized with varying approaches toward perfection. Imperfection may be a better word. I have not spoken of these. I have given you no assurance that I have tried to be a good Sister of the Holy Cross. The evidence may not even come through on the pages which follow.

What we think and what we feel, particularly in matters of religion and religious experiences, are not synonymous. Our thought we can share freely and happily. We have words for much of what we think. Our profoundest feelings we need not try to explain even to ourselves. They simply are. The silence of my text is all that I can tell you of these.

Given the order of my day, let us go forward with the record of how it and the grace of God have worked in the case of one girl out of hundreds.

I

The Twenty-fourth of May

IN 1887, May twenty-fourth was the feast of Our Lady, Help of Christians, in the liturgical calendar. England celebrated it as the birthday of Queen Victoria. Canada called it "Queen's Day." Among the numerous small towns in northwestern Wisconsin is the island city of Cumberland. Here, on this day, I came to town. In the home of August and Lucy Wolff, I had been preceded nineteen months earlier by a brother, Julius Frederick. Our brother, Werner Peter, arrived two and a half years later. I was baptized Mary Evaline.

Twenty-four years before, a young Pomeranian widow with her three children, August, William and Augusta had landed, after a twenty-seven-day sea voyage in a sailing vessel, in New York City. They became a part of a German colony in the environs of Milwaukee, settling finally just west of Watertown. Little August Frederick, aged nine, with the vanished prestige of the Holy Roman Empire reflected in his name, immediately found himself odd jobs as errand boy or the like. Honest, observant, generous, he was self-supporting at the age of eleven. An apprentice of an expert saddler, he became a harness maker, loving and honoring his trade which he discontinued only at the age of ninety. He liked to think of himself as the oldest craftsman in a trade which he used whimsically to say was killed by gasoline.

The Ringlings were a family of harness makers in Baraboo, a city somewhat larger than Watertown and very near it. Here young August worked at the bench with the four Ringling boys. The call of the "Big Top" already stirred the blood of young Johnny, aged fourteen. He ran away. August Wolff, little older nor larger, was sent in pursuit. As you know, he found and brought him home.

Operating the harness shop in the General Store of Isaac Alsbacher in Mauston, Wisconsin, the young craftsman met Lucy Arntz, a teacher

during school time, and a summer clerk in the store. Lucy was the third of the thirteen children of Peter and Bernadine Arntz. Her parents had come to the United States from Essen, Germany, in the 1840's. Peter was thirty-five, a linguist, a world traveler, a pioneer; Bernadine, nineteen, delicately reared, educated by tutors. During her first eight months in the wilderness of Wisconsin, she saw no women except Indian squaws. Yet, always even the roughest workmen in the mill or on the farm paid her the spontaneous tribute, "Mrs. Arntz is a lady."

Peter Arntz had come to America at the call of its pioneer forests, its lumber industry. He chose for his millsite what is now head of the Dells on the Wisconsin river. Because of his superior education, he became secretary to the Lieutenant Governor of the then territory of Wisconsin. Many a committee met in the great dining-room-kitchen of the spacious home where now the Arntz Hotel stands.

Frozen almost into helplessness breaking roads through impassable snowdrifts for his men and his horses, Peter was physically unable to develop his lumber business. It may be a matter of interest to some to know that the timber in the first buildings of the Dominican Convent at Sinsinawa, Wisconsin, came from his mill.

Lucy had gentility and pluck in her make-up. When the young harness maker in Mauston proposed homemaking in Cumberland, she accepted life partnership in a quaint idyllic business with the smell of leather on it. Into their home and their business, I was born these seventy-one years ago.

You should know something of our town of fifteen hundred inhabitants. It lay on an island about two miles long, stretching north and south in the blue sandy-shored Beaver Dam Lake. Front or Main Street for business and Back Street for homes make their way with the contour of the island from end to end. Cross streets and lake shores provide school, church, and home sites. The lake extends five miles north. At its head, one can enter a second lake and so on for twenty miles until one comes to a village of Chippewa Indians. Here in my childhood lived old Cutlip and his squaw, Curly Pipe, Jack Wake Me Up, and a family registered in the county school records under the name "Little Bear Roll Down the Hill and Sleep Three Days." Because these Indians brought deer hair and buckskins to my father's shop, they are among my earliest memories and my cherished friends.

The lake is one of the deep loves of my life. I met it first when I was scarcely two years old. The time was Sunday evening and we were going for a boat ride. Standing on the shore and looking at more water in one place than I had ever seen before, I announced decisively, "I don't want to get into that big tub." But my capitulation was complete. Even today

my first question about my home town touches the lake: "Is it high or low this year?" and so on.

From the time I could balance myself precariously on skates I was the first girl on and the last girl off the ice in winter. Sometimes a single boy, more daring than myself, had got ahead of me, but I loved the thrill of spinning off with the ice cracking under every stroke.

I learned to swim dog-fashion with a small board under my chest, and loved to swim across the lake in its narrowest part. Beaver Dam Lake taught me so much of the wonder and beauty of water that years later, at Carmel, California, I rushed into the Pacific for the first time, breathlessly confident that I could hold the entire ocean and it could hold me, each in the other's arms.

II

The Cat Is Black

A SIXTH birthday on May 24, 1893, gave me a certain maturity in entering the first grade of our public and only school in September of that year. This I realized when a worried mother left her son, older, larger, but worlds less independent than myself, in my care. She assured him that he could depend upon me. Naturally, it pleases me to record that for many years now he has been a most successful lawyer in New York City.

In the third seat from the back, second row of the A class, first grade, I immediately began a short course in self-education. Our first lesson in reading, writing, and spelling looked us straight in the face from the blackboard in the front of the room. On the broadly-ruled lines, in perfect Spencerian penmanship, ran the legend, "The cat is black."

My nicely ruled slate in my right hand, my pencil in my left, I began at once to copy, from the *k* right to left, the model on the board. With a feeling of relative assurance that I had already anticipated most of her work for the year in my regard, I presented my slate to our beloved Miss Williams when she reached my place in the room. She looked at it with something less than the unqualified satisfaction that I had expected. Then she said gently, "Yes, but now, dear, suppose we take the pencil in the other hand and begin at the other side of the slate and the other end of the sentence."

The old feud between left hand and right was on again. I had encountered it at the dining table with my small knife and fork and spoon. Now it asserted itself in others of my life's tools, my slate and pencil. The

cat is still black, but I must say so with my right hand, traveling horizontally from left to right.

Even now, in hours of sleeplessness, my mind goes back to this first half hour of school. It travels from right to left, following the first pattern of script it ever directed, repeating again and again the lefthanded report "The cat is black" on Eva Wolff's small slate.

Lead pencils succeeded slates in the second grade. Here, during recess, I had my first grapefruit. My chum, Anna, had a brother in the railroad offices of Saint Paul. To this big city of the Northwest came the fabulous fruits of the then promised land of California. Grapefruit was such. Bill had brought some home. Anna and I had one to share. Bill said it was a treat. We believed him. With difficulty we peeled our fruit and divided it equally, section by section. Faith in Bill and experimental knowledge were at odds. Compromise was required. We settled by thanking Bill for our now superior knowledge, admitting to each other that the fruit had not completely fulfilled our dreams. Womanwise, however, we agreed that there might be other ways of eating grapefruit with which we were not acquainted.

Spencerian pens, ink and small inkwells and glossy paper marked the new academic levels of the third grade. Also two bookshelves in the back of the room held juvenile books that we were allowed to take home. *Dolly Dimple Fly Away* and *Toby Tyler* or *Ten Weeks with a Circus* were my first enchanting withdrawals. The great attic above our dining room and kitchen held stacks of *Homiletic Review*, stored there by our pastor. On rainy Saturdays I used to pore helplessly over them. After my taste had been formed by Dolly Dimple and Toby I wondered if in all my life I could ever read a book without pictures and conversations.

Methods in writing appear to measure these years of elementary education. Vertical writing began to invade the blackboards. My fourth-grade teacher wrote a precise, tailored, vertical hand. It fitted my mind and its demands for simplicity and legibility. My penmanship today is a survival or an evolution of my still loyal imitation of Miss Anderson.

In the seventh and eighth grades I encountered one of the great teachers of my life. Mrs. Kavanaugh, left a widow shortly after the birth of her only child, returned to teaching as a livelihood and a life. No student ever forgot her. We gave her the complete deference of semi-fearful obedience and unqualified respect. In seventh grade we studied stocks and bonds. In eighth we anticipated the first quarter of high school algebra. These were rewards for having completed the normal grade work better than well. Shakespeare and Latin were other such rewards. We lived to learn, so learning to live richly.

To our seventh-grade physiology class, the doctor in the town brought

the human skeleton from his laboratory for us to look at, to handle. It did us good to know that each of us was housing, under our young flesh and blood, such an ivory scaffold. We saw bits of our own scaffolding through his X ray, very new in 1898. The butcher brought us calves' brains, hearts and eyes, lobes, auricles, ventricles, lungs which we held in our childish hands. This laboratory Mrs. Kavanaugh made possible in her seventh- and eighth-grade kingdom, totaling not more than thirty hungry, thirsty subjects.

She procured for us from a school board full of faith and good works the best relief maps of our five major continents that I have ever seen. She saw us standing on the threshold of the twentieth century as makers of it and our places in it. Etymology became, and because of her still is for me, a beloved land of the wonder of words. Mythology still lives. I find myself more at home with Perseus and Jason and the Centaurs than with the headlines of the morning papers. *The Lady of the Lake* was not Scott, but Scotland. Ellen and James Fitz-James and Roderick Dhu are my own eighth-grade classmates, albeit literary celebrities.

June came and graduation from the grades. In September I would take my second big academic step. I would go into high school.

III

Horse and Buggy Days

CUMBERLAND was one of the many small mill towns that mark the ruthless destruction of our primeval forests; sawmills, planing mills, shingle mills edged one end of the lake. Fresh-cut lumber stood in piles like small Rockefeller Centers near them. They formed so much a part of our childhood thinking that during electric storms, after deafening bursts of thunder, we would exclaim, "The lumber piles are falling down!" and run to the window to see. But always they remained perpendicular, new, clean-smelling with fascinating walks for us to run through and play among.

Our shop on Front Street, and our home in a yard occupying a quarter of the block on Back Street, offered unique variety and place for play. My friends, the trees, dominated our entire domain. I had a pact with myself that I had climbed or could climb every one of them except the giant elms. Often, on sunny summer mornings mother would come out to the yard to be greeted by a child's voice calling from the blue, "Mama, find me!" Finally, she would find her small daughter, perched jauntily on a branch at the top of a basswood or a maple tree. There were a

thorn apple and one particular maple that still remain mine in the memory of our family.

Swings, hammock, croquet grounds had their proper places. Plum, cherry, apple groves had theirs. There were the perennial shrubs, flower and vegetable gardens, the small fruits, currants, raspberries, strawberries. We each had our own responsibilities for these. Fred was the master berry-picker, Vern the inventor of ways and means. I had charge of the asparagus bed and the strawberry patch. In this world of growing things, we knew and marked the seasons accurately. We watched the continuing mystery of creation.

For many years, hard and soft woods furnished the fuel of the north. Every home had its woodshed. Ours was a large one, so large that one half was filled with double trapezes, rings, bars. Here many a three-pin-admission show took place. Here many a terrified mother watched her offspring twisted into birds' nests or hanging from trapezes by their heels.

No children now, and few at any time, have had a harness shop for a playhouse. We had. The big back room was piled high with empty boxes of all kinds. Goods from the wholesale houses had been shipped in them: everything from buffalo robes to silver mountings for light driving harness. In the early nineties, the largest of these boxes were filled with beautiful, heavy handmade logging harness and shipped to the Weyerhauser Lumber Camps in the state of Washington.

We children learned to use pliers, pincers, hammers in opening boxes, in sorting nails and tacks, in nailing the empty boxes partly shut. We anticipated modern perpendicular architecture in our piled-up box houses. We set up stores and played house in the largest boxes.

The workroom had built-in benches on all the walls: cutting benches, splicing and riveting benches, workbenches. These were provided with fascinating tools and as many stitching horses as they could accommodate. We played among the big rolls of pungent leather. We tangled and untangled knotted rope. When we could pre-empt an idle stitching horse, we hitched it up with a quickly improvised rope harness and drove away into worlds of make-believe.

Eventually, all the handwork in the shop was replaced by machinery. Eventually, the harness trade became a lost trade. For my father, it was always a craft and an art. He loved it. For more than sixty years, the best harness makers in our northwest served their apprenticeship in his shop.

In 1946 I visited my home in Cumberland for the last time. One morning I walked into the shop to find father seated on his stitching horse with a golden-haired little girl of four beside him. He was teaching her to sew on leather with two wax threads and two blunt needles.

The front room was the salesroom: walls hung with harness, collars,

hames, shelves piled with sweat pads, racks laden with robes, counters bright with blankets. The whip rack fascinated us. Here we could choose among dozens of whips to see which would crack loudest, most imperatively. On wooden horses we could sit astride great western saddles, or mount elegantly on the women's sidesaddles of the day. Buckles, snaps, red and green tassels, flynets—what a world of unwonted toys! Best of all were the bells: pairs of bells, strings of sleigh bells, cow bells, sheep bells. On the president's table in the dining room of Saint Mary's College today an imported French bell is rung before every meal. This gives the signal for silence before grace. It is a sheep bell from my father's harness shop.

The harness maker at Cumberland automatically enjoyed the use of the best horses and carriages in the livery stables. This meant long drives in the country on summer Sunday afternoons. The three children took turns sitting in the front seat and helping to drive. Going into the country, father and mother told us the names of the grains and vegetables in the fields we passed. Returning, we made the identifications for them. A clump of lovely wildflowers, a patch of bright raspberries or strawberries always brought us to a stop and a minor raid.

Sunday afternoons in winter hold very dear memories for me. Father and I would climb into "our big chair" and read poetry aloud. Father always had a store: the "memory-gem" collections of those days, or better still, his own scrapbooks of poems clipped from newspapers and magazines. These he kept and shared with me until his death.

Both our grandfathers had died before we could have known them. Visiting the homes of our parents meant "going to grandma's." This we did biennially, at least. I was just past three on the first of these visits that I can remember. We stopped overnight in Madison. My younger brother was still a baby, and the maid in the hotel dressed me and took me alone to the dining room. When the family arrived they found me already sitting in state, having ordered my breakfast of strawberries and chicken.

Later in the day, like simple small-town folk we called on Governor Peck. No less simple than his guests he received us graciously and took us through the capitol. We left the baby asleep on the couch in his office. You will understand now why *Peck's Bad Boy* and *Peck's Uncle Ike and the Red-Headed Boy* were classics in our childhood.

One remembers southern Wisconsin in the 1890's for its woods, blue lakes, rollicking rivers, banked in places by wind and water-sculptured bluffs. Grandmother Arntz's farm lay in such a spot at the juncture of the Lemonware with the Wisconsin River. Here we climbed among the rocks, waded the river, slid down haystacks. Here our stalwart young

uncles tossed us astride the big farm horses as they led them down to water after work.

On our last visit to the farm, when I was perhaps twelve, mother took me one late afternoon on a walk along the places dear to her childhood. We climbed the highest bluff and looked down at the tumultuous river fifty feet below. But between it and us, sheathed in its single leaf, a showy orchid, a lovely pink moccasin flower lifted its beauty for us to share. To me it was "beauty's self and beauty's giver."

We walked back to the house quietly. As we climbed over a stile leading into the garden, we stopped, moved by the wordless loveliness of the afternoon. As we stood, saying nothing at all, a whippoorwill sang its wistful wonder of that hour, the most complete I have ever shared with my mother.

My father's home stood just at the west city limits of Watertown. Here we saw flax grown, spun, woven into linen for the beds in which we slept. And, in the name of all beauty-rests, we slept between feather beds.

Grandmother's great looms stood in the north half of the upstairs of the big barn. On winter nights at home we used to tear and sew carpet rags, roll them into great balls of assorted colors. The hit-and-miss balls were the biggest. All were sent to grandma. Sitting on the bench beside her, I would watch for hours her busy traffic of shuttled woof among the dexterously threaded warp of the loom. She was weaving our carpet rags into the bright carpets that were to be the floor coverings of our bedrooms.

The smokehouse was an epicure's delight. Sausages of all shapes and varieties, smoked goose breast, cheeses were among the delicacies ranged there in neat German order. "Going to grandma's" was no commonplace experience.

As we grew older, we visited hop fields and the great sheds in which the hops were cured. We walked through the blocks of seasoning cheeses. Father had a quasi theory that ordinary cheese belonged in mousetraps, but Wisconsin cheese was made for men.

Grandfather Arntz and his men had cut the lumber off the main streets of Milwaukee. Naturally, we entered the city in a mood of squatter's rights. In my uncle's crockery store I was allowed to make my own choice of a set of play dishes. I selected a set of Spode ware in pretty red—six of everything, plates big enough for bread and butter service and cups for demitasse. A child's sense of beauty was already stirring in my subconsciousness.

Our horse and buggy days were happy ones. We lived with the mystery of the seasons: the aurora, sundogs, halos round the moon, the first

robin, the first hepaticas, the first fresh strawberries, summer rainbows, or flaming autumns.

Let me make a composite of three incidents in summary. The winter of my fourth year mother became precariously ill. Our third little brother was born prematurely and baptized Leo for our then reigning pontiff. The nurse brought the perfect little boy for us to see, knowing that he could not live. Later we saw him again in his little white coffin before my father, the priest and the undertaker put him to bed in our cemetery, the youngest of all the dear dead, our small Saint Leo.

Mother's condition grew worse. Christmas was a heartbreaking day. Our washwoman came in and found me crying in the dining room. She asked the cause. "My mama is so sick," I answered, "I am afraid she is going to die." The priest and the doctor stood with father at mother's bedside. They looked at us three small children. "Doc," said the priest, "we can't let this little woman die." They didn't.

Tramps used to come quite commonly to our kitchen door in those days, asking for food. Ordinarily, mother or our hired girl would fix them a meal on the kitchen table. I was always incensed at their indigence and more than ready to send them on to earn their own living. This particular noon I saw one of these guests pass the dining room window. In a flash I jumped up saying, "Let me take care of him." My father, quicker, went to the door, brought the man in, seated him at the head of our table, and served him first.

One day in early June we were at table, just beginning dinner. Suddenly a luscious bird song broke the noonday quiet. Instantly, spontaneously the entire family were on their feet and out on the porch. In the near-by poplar tree, the first oriole of summer was telling us that he had returned.

The old ways and old days are over, irrevocable even to imitate, but dear to remember.

IV

United Nations

IN THE 1890's our empire builders began spanning our country west of the Mississippi with steel highways. Our great railway systems moved westward to the Pacific. James J. Hill brought a colony of laborers from southern Italy and Sicily to make the roadbeds and lay the tracks for the Great Northern Railroad. The wives and children of these men he settled in comfortable homes with good garden plots just south of Cumberland.

Their family names read like an art catalogue: St. Angelos, de Riccis, Donatellos. A simple frame Church, St. Anthony's, constituted their spiritual capitol.

Eight miles south a robust German settlement flourished; east ten miles or more a smaller French colony. The pastor of our Saint Mary's Church in Cumberland had the spiritual care of these with the towns of Shell Lake and Spooner to the north in addition. This meant that we had Mass on Sundays on alternate weeks, sometimes only once a month. Families from south and east drove in to church through almost impossible roads and weather. Coffee and toast were always hot on our range for them before they started back home.

A significant fact is that the pastor of these United Nations had to be a linguist. During my childhood most of our priests were from Europe or had been educated there. Although we did not realize this, the culture of these pastors was not entirely wasted on us. Always at Sunday Masses we assisted at the Holy Sacrifice in Latin, and listened to announcement, Epistle and Gospel in English, French, German, Italian. This is quite a commentary on our heritage from the alleged low mentality of our Catholic immigrant ancestors.

No Catholic college for women existed in the United States before 1890. Very few parish grade or high schools existed in Wisconsin, none near enough for us to attend. Our religious instruction and our preparation for Holy Communion depended entirely on our pastor. Fortunately, a brilliant young priest, Father Stephen Leinfelder, educated in Rome, had been sent to pioneer in our north woods. His instructions for first Holy Communion were among the great spiritual and intellectual experiences of my life.

With no room in his house big enough for us to meet in, he took us into the church, seated us on the kneelers, transforming the seats into desks. Here we wrote down, at his careful dictation, the theology of the Blessed Sacrament. After an hour's work, always after school, we went home, copied our dictation carefully in ink and special notebooks and memorized the entire text. This was recited at class before the next dictation. Few children, I think, have ever been so honored in the quality of their instruction.

On the eve and the day of my first Holy Communion I surprised my parents with the only signs of asceticism they ever saw in me. Like most good German families we always ended our day with our glass of beer. This evening I walked quietly over to my father and mother to kiss them good night. "But you haven't had your nightcap," said my father in surprise. "I don't think I care for any," I said lamely. Mother helped me out. "Let her alone," she said, "if she wants to do this."

I had quantities of chestnut-colored wavy hair which I ordinarily wore down my back in curls. For fear I might be tempted to vanity on this greatest day of my life, I had my mother braid it tightly while all my little girl friends were transfigured in rag curls under their veils.

On May 29, 1898, our class received the sacrament of Confirmation. I had now reached the age of spiritual maturity.

V

Foothills of Parnassus

I WAS always the youngest and the smallest girl in my class. In the grades this meant a front seat and the automatic privilege of leading ranks as we marched around the room for exercise. In the big seats in high school it meant that my feet never touched the floor in the hours of sitting during my freshman year. The boys found this amusing until we began to work on algebra and Latin together. After that, they stopped teasing the littlest girl in high school.

Our high school offered two programs, one preparatory for college, the other terminal. As preparation for college we studied four years of Latin, two of German, algebra, plane and solid geometry, English, physical geography, botany, physics, history, constitutional government. Latin and German were my big intellectual experiences. Mathematics came next. The other subjects, I think because of the teachers, never came alive. My mother always described her children as "book and pencil crazy." I loved to read and always had my nose in a book. For all that, very little in my English classes stirred me except with indignation at the sarcasm of our teachers. It was a petty weapon to use against the unimportance of mere youth.

Our principals were always good, interested in all of us, identified with our work and our play. They gave us excellent talks at the opening sessions of the day. They contrived fifteen-minute free periods to read aloud to us: *Alice of Old Vincennes, David Harum, Main Travelled Roads.* They organized debating teams and brought the Lincoln-Douglas and Webster-Hayne debates to eloquent life.

Our schoolhouse was just a block from home on Back Street. It formed the center of our growing minds and activities in our early teens.

Saint Mary's Church was half a mile north on Front or Main Street. Some of our family went to Mass daily if our priest was not on a mission. During Lent we children all went every day. This meant early rising,

breakfast, a race to our unheated frame church, often with the thermometer telling a true story of fifteen or twenty degrees below zero. We managed to make the Way of the Cross, assist at Mass, cover the half mile back to school before 8:50 A.M. What a marathon and with what enthusiasm and earnestness we made it!

Before my senior year a fine new school building was erected just across the street from our church. This simplified our difficulties in assisting at daily Mass. It expanded tremendously the facilities for good academic training. Declamatory contests were organized. Successful contestants went to county, and if surviving, to regional contests. I believe that I qualified for at least one of each.

Our schoolmates, with intense loyalty, went with us on these trips. We exhibited the same school spirit in accompanying our football teams to games with neighboring high schools.

The gymnasium of the new high school provided a fine basketball floor. Here, in copious woolen blouses and bloomers, we played boys' rules, at the peril of our lives.

Early in June, 1904, our class was graduated. Our commencement week included a class play in which I had a part against the leading man who was at the time immersed in romance with another girl. The impact of our performance was not overwhelming, I assure you. The conferring of diplomas climaxed the final evening on which we delivered our commencement essays. Our class numbered eight, I believe. We memorized our compositions and gave them without benefit of manuscripts or notable eloquence. Under the direction of my excellent German teacher I had written on "German Ballads and Folk Songs." This interested me particularly because my first attempt to write poetry was a translation of Goethe that I had quoted in this essay. I still find his lines very beautiful:

Über allen Gipfeln
Ist Ruh'.

The school year was over. I had been graduated from high school. Our parents had never promised us money. They had always promised us an education. I had some now. I was ready for more.

At the moment my father was building a new shop, still one of the substantial business buildings in Cumberland. Fred would be a sophomore at the University of Wisconsin. Mother used to tell us that our father pulled wax threads for all that we had. He needed time now to get ahead of inordinate expenses. So I stayed home for the year, kept the house, did the buying, meal planning for our family of four, and read Shakespeare some afternoons each week with our high school prin-

cipal and two of my classmates. Meanwhile, motorboats had come to our lake, dubious automobiles to our dirt roads. I did more than a fair share of riding in both. I was just seventeen and ready for the University of Wisconsin in September.

VI

Varsity, Varsity

WHEN, suddenly one day not too long ago, I asked myself, "Why didn't I go to a Catholic college for women?" I was faced with the fact that there were none, or practically none at that time, not at least within my geographical reach.

Adolescence had been filled for me with uncertainties, confusion. Why was I in existence at all? For what particular reason had God made me? What things were right or wrong? For whom and why? I was at odds with ambiguities. I wanted answers to be aye, aye and nay, nay. Applied to my intellectual life, I could not learn from my teachers exactly what was wrong with a composition, even a sentence. The immutable rectitude of the problem that I had solved correctly pleased me. The comment on my paper, "Try to improve this sentence," left me completely adrift. In the cause of certitudes, I elected mathematics as my major. Presently I found myself, with one or two other girls, in classes with engineers.

Professors Munro and Sellery gave that year what was for me a thoroughly satisfying experience in education. This in a lecture course on medieval history. But for me it meant art, architecture, evolving cultures, the Benedictine schools, the Crusades, the guilds. The great loves of my life are in so much of all this. Certainly, I have had more scintillating, more spectacular professors, but none have ever taught me more. For instance, I, a freshman from a microscopic town in the northern woods, was assigned for a term paper, "A Commentary on the Rule of Saint Benedict." At last I had come to a teacher who addressed himself to my mind.

English, German, French, and the inevitable physical education completed my program. For one year I wrote three themes a week, two prepared and one impromptu. All were corrected; all were returned to us. A few were read aloud in class for criticism. When the comments became too caustic, we girls who sat in the front rows would all stare steadfastly at our instructor's feet. This would set him pacing up and down the platform and relieve our indignation. It was our only redress.

By the end of the year I knew the difference between a sentence and a

paragraph, a comma and a semicolon, exposition and narration. I had had English!

My brother lived with a group of boys, mostly Catholic, at 619 Francis Street. They, with some of my girl friends and me, used to go together to Mass at Saint Patrick's on Sunday. A group of South American, Mexican, and Filipino boys often joined us. During the week Father Hengel, the chaplain for the Catholic students at the University, gave us excellent instructions in Catholic dogma. Mr. and Mrs. McCabe, a generous Catholic couple, opened their beautiful home to us for dances once a month. We had a fine sense of spiritual unity.

Within the year, the boys negotiated the purchase of the former Chi Omega House on State Street for a Catholic student center. The Chapel of Saint Paul came next in the organized Catholic student life in Wisconsin. We were the pioneer group in what are now the Newman Clubs on all our great university and college campuses. My brother Fred and I take justifiable pride in having helped to break the ground.

In his sophomore year, Frank Shroeder, one of Fred's engineer classmates, had married a lovely girl from Philadelphia, a Quaker at least one generation removed from the "thee" and "thou" Friends. They had an apartment on University Avenue. This became our social home. Only septuagenarians will remember the campus of my time when Chadbourne was the only residence hall for women with Miss Mayhew for its dean.

The Shroeders had their piano and music, their friends with violins. Mother used to send occasional boxes of "chicken and all that." University life could not have been more gracious.

Fred was a junior, which meant that I went with him to the Junior Prom. Clare Shroeder cared for me as her younger sister. We worked and played together. Fred and I used to take long walks on drizzly afternoons, browse in secondhand bookstores or tramp out to the University farm. Here a brilliant deaf and dumb research student used to take us around and in climax let us taste the cheeses.

We took the hurdles of fine concerts, lectures in French and German. Sarah Bernhardt came to Madison, playing in *Camille*. Thinking that Dumas was on the Index, I made the great refusal, not attending the performance. We did see "divine Sarah," made up like a French doll, driving through the Latin quarters and bowing graciously to students right and left. Imagine my amused astonishment at discovering the identity of *La Traviata*, which we invited to our campus in 1958, with the play that I had so conscientiously foregone as a coed.

The hours of most sustained interest were those spent at the University library. Here I had books, the reasons and the leisure to use them.

One cannot overestimate what these mean to students at the precise moment that they are ready to learn.

The great teachers whom we knew or worked with still keep their achieved places: President Van Hise, "Sunny" Pyre, Karl Young among them. Professor Schlichter taught my brothers. His son, Sumner, our great economist of Harvard, was a curly-headed boy of seven or eight when we used to meet him playing on Lake Street.

VII

It Pays to Advertise

THE first summer home from college meant settling back into my place in my crowd, in town. We talked, danced, swam, motored by land and water. We rented a houseboat and for two weeks floated up and down the lake, fishing, swimming, just being, in the sun and under the long twilight evening skies. We came home bronzed with tan and starved for sleep.

The University had not become a conviction with me. One day I picked up the current *McClure's Magazine* in our nearest drug store. It carried the summer section on private schools and colleges. Set in the center of a page was this two-inch announcement:

> Saint Mary's College
> Notre Dame, Indiana
> A Liberal Arts College for Women
> For information address the secretary

Something extraordinary had happened. I bought the magazine, hurried home, sat on the back porch reading and rereading the simple statement. I said to myself, "If this makes a difference in my life I shall always remember it." Though there were only four of us at home I hid the magazine, terrified at the possibility of losing it. Some days later my mother said, "If you are going back to the University you had better be attending to your clothes." We had grown up making, pretty generally, our own choices and decisions. "I don't think I am going back to the University," I answered. "Where are you going?" came mother's astonished question. "To Saint Mary's College." Just like that! Mother was combing her hair and had it ready to twist into a French knot at the top of her head. Amazed, she loosed her hand and her pretty hair fell like a veil over her shoulders. "What do you think your father will say?" came next. "Oh! he will let me go," I assured her. He did.

I wrote a ridiculous letter to the Secretary, saying that I had completed a year at the University of Wisconsin, that I was accustomed to having my own way and a fair amount of social life; notwithstanding I wished to come to Saint Mary's in September. My absurd epistle remained unanswered. Instead, my parents received a most gracious letter in miraculous handwriting assuring them of my welcome and care for my well-being there.

The rest of this summer was busy with uniforms, table service, all the standard French boarding school appurtenances of 1906. Mother was in a daze of incredulous delight at her reckless daughter's electing a convent school. Father proudly displayed the beautiful letters from Saint Mary's to his most intelligent customers. He never lost that overwhelming pride in the college and the sisters.

Customarily, a graduate or a friend of the sisters met any students coming into Chicago. Darling Effie Ehrhardt met me, relayed me to a Cumberland boy who also met me, took me to lunch and put me on the train for South Bend.

Here a horse-drawn cab drove me out to school. Coming up the avenue I saw a sister of the Holy Cross for the first time. I observed mostly her cap and thought "How like a sunbonnet!" I was not enamored then nor am I now with the habit. Indeed, I have never seen a religious habit in which I would choose to spend the rest of my life for beauty's sake, spelling beauty with a small b. Arriving at Holy Cross Hall I felt that at least I was near to where I belonged. I had never thought that at Madison.

Although I had a transcript of A's and B's from the University, and despite my protest, I was put back into freshman English with sophomore English as a possibility. By Thanksgiving I was graduated from the freshman class. My dedication to mathematics was diverted. I signed up for Latin V, French II, German IV, Logic, Music; Christian Doctrine was a matter of course. My first hour in Latin V sounded serious and honest-to-goodness. At the end of the hour I went to Sister Angela, a Radcliffe graduate, and said, "This sounds hard." She said, "It is." "I think I will change to water colors," was my trivial commentary. I did. I have never ceased to regret that she or any of my teachers had not tried to find the possible student under the impossible girl and put me through a stiff course in the classics.

After the first semester in French at Wisconsin one translated rapidly and well either with preparation or at sight, or one did not recite at all. In consequence I was a prodigy to dear Sister Eugenie who did violence to her beautiful French by letting me teach elementary classes at times.

As I was growing up I found myself expecting to meet sometime a

wonderful woman who would have a profound influence on my life. Knowing and loving Clare Shroeder I used to wonder if she might be the person. "No," I thought, "she was not enough older than I nor even enough wiser. I advised her as often as she counseled me." Now at Saint Mary's I went to my first sophomore English class. A sister about my own height came into the room, dark-eyed, straight-featured, quiet-mannered Sister Rita. She had just returned from Europe with Sister Irma and Elizabeth Jordan, the editor of *Harper's Bazaar*. Here was the long-awaited lady of my dream. Sister Rita had studied at Harvard, had had for friends, teachers, or both, Bliss Perry, Hamilton Wright Mabie, Charles Wells Moulton, Maurice Francis Egan, Charles Warren Stoddard. Sister Rita, with the first Father John Cavanaugh, president of the University of Notre Dame, and Father Daniel Hudson, editor de luxe of the *Ave Maria*, formed the most brilliant triumvirate of teachers, writers, scholars that the two schools had known. Sister shared with us the riches of all these associations.

She always made our assignments for at least a month in advance. The wisdom of this period of gestation pleased me. As a teacher, I have always tried to imitate it. Lyric verse came as one of our first written exercises. With the immediacy of the confirmed extrovert I rushed up to Sister after class to tell her that I could not write poetry. She assured me that she knew that. Then I announced that I did not know what to write about. She suggested that I give some thought to the subject. My "German Ballads and Folk Songs" rushed into the vacuum. I had Goethe by the scruff of the neck. I would translate him. And though Sister laughed at my platitudinous version of his delicate German, I had come upon a manner of writing that I had never tried or been taught to use before. The discovery exhilarated me. After that I would lie awake at nights trying to fashion every lovely thing I knew into verse. I had found my medium.

Our English classes were conducted like seminars, around tables. Occasionally, after half an hour's lecture Sister would scatter current magazines on the tables and walk out of the room, leaving us to our own resources. Sometimes candy would substitute for periodicals. On her return she never found us in disorder. This is, I submit, one way of teaching English. I capitulated. Not that I loved mathematics less but that I loved English more.

As a child and a growing girl I had enjoyed an unusual degree of reasonable independence in my home. At public school and university we students collaborated in rather than surrendered to discipline. The French boarding school régime around which life at Saint Mary's moved presented more than one enigma to me. Loving the school, and with

complete good will for all it wished of me, I found myself a confused and involuntary nonconformist. In freshman English I had read Robert Louis Stevenson. I subscribed to his statement that books are a mighty bloodless substitute for life. I agreed that hours of full free truancy under the open skies are much more illuminating than incarceration in a dull classroom. Putting the theory into practice, I discovered that our prefect did not see eye to eye with R.L.S. and me. A girl was dispatched to interrupt my enjoyment of the great out-of-doors and to tell me that I was to go to class. "Tell Sister Claudia that I am not going to class today" was my clear-cut, decisive reply. Even now, at Saint Mary's this might amount to academic revolt.

Later, in the prefect's office, Sister asked the old, old question: "Why did you come here to school if you did not expect to keep the rules?" "Sister," I answered quite honestly and simply, "some of the rules, I think, are rather foolish."

One case can stand for many. I made the dearest friendships of my life during these two years. "Dix and the bunch" were and are the rarest of persons. My marks were always well above ninety—all except observance of rules. So at the end of two years my record, printed in the bound volumes of the annual catalogues, tells this story. My name appears as a student enrolled in the college. Beyond that, I did not even qualify for honorable mention. All my friends were in the places of the elect. As a Saint Mary's girl I was and am in Limbo.

Father Bertrand Conway, O.P., author of the *Question Box*, gave the first retreat I had ever made. This was in late October, 1906. To me it opened spiritual worlds of which I think I must have had some intuition, for which I know I had an immense and clamorous hunger. For the first time the religious life was presented to my judgment and mind as well as to my emotions. These told me that here was something that mattered, something worth doing and being. "Why had God made me?" There were all the classes I had cut, parties in my room, talking out of time to bear testimony against me. Worst of all, I had never asked to be admitted to the Sodality of Our Lady because I knew it would mean almost immediate expulsion. Pride recoiled from that. Clearly, the religious life was what I most desired and for which I had most completely disqualified myself. God did not make sisters out of girls like me.

VIII

Year of Decision

STOPPING to see friends in Madison on my way home in June I found that private boarding school had raised my social status. Grooming, posture, hairdress, manner were all not only commented on but commended. Saint Mary's was beginning to show. In Cumberland the same held true. For the first little while the girls were a bit stiff and aloof. Then they told me that they had expected boarding school to estrange me from them. In a moment we were all laughing at their mistake.

Father, mother, Vern and I were our whole family that summer. With considerable persistence I insisted that we speak German at our meals. We were a good conversational group and knew at least the difference between *essen* and *fressen*. No meals were spoiled, no great proficiency acquired; but at least our German did not atrophy.

At school our French classes had subscribed to weekly newspapers. Nothing in my education and his investment pleased my father more than my ability to read with ease my weekly French journal as he brought it to me from the post office.

Weeks passed; two at a cottage up the lake, two on the Mesabi Range where Fred was doing summer work in mining engineering. My wardrobe was put in order, luggage packed, and I was on my way to Saint Paul for a day's shopping en route to school. My train left shortly before midnight. Few porters were available at that late hour. Like the typical boarding school girl, I was loaded down with packages. A young boy offered to help me. On reaching my Pullman I thanked him and vainly proffered a tip. Taking off his hat, he said: "Gentlemen don't need no thanks." The gallant, albeit ungrammatical, idealism of that boy sent me happily back to college.

This year I returned as an old girl. Realities began to clarify, objectives to emerge. Sister Rita was still Sister Rita. I read seriously, discovered the first slender volumes of Alice Meynell and Francis Thompson. My neighbor across the hall used to light pink candles in the room and read Coventry Patmore aloud to me.

All summer I had gone to Holy Communion every Sunday and as often as possible during the week. This was not so normal then as now. By the very logic of eating three meals a day I began to go to Mass and Holy Communion daily. This meant rising at 5:30. Eileen Buddy Redmond, youngest sister of Bishop Charles Buddy, was my good friend in this. But always, always there was that unanswered question, "For

what had God made me?" I had long since resolved that if I could only find out what, I would do it with all my might as long as I lived.

In desperation, I used to steal down to Sister Rita's classroom evenings to ask for help. At the door I would turn and go back to my room and my confusion. I knew that I would do whatever Sister told me to. Suppose I did what she wanted rather than what God wanted! No, I would take no chances even for her.

The Junior class had the questionable privilege of writing Memorial Day poems from which the best were selected to be read on the Memorial Day program. Mine was one of the two chosen that year. After the program I went up to the classroom of one of my teachers for a little visit. From her north windows I looked out at the novices and postulants at recreation. They were walking and talking together; a lively team was playing baseball. Again my old restlessness, "I wonder what I will be doing ten years from now," I said, half questioning Sister.

"I suppose if you thought that you might be a Sister you would be furious," was her astonishing reply. "Why, I would be the happiest girl in the world," I burst out with conviction, "but I know that I could never be a nun," with equal certainty.

One afternoon Sister and I walked on the river bank and talked of the religious life. No one had ever spoken of it to me before. I listened breathlessly, reverently. "I will do anything that God wants me to," I said, "if I can only find out what it is." "That is all that one needs for a religious vocation," was Sister's easy, simple answer. How it comforted me! She gave me an equally simple, easy booklet on vocation which was apocalyptic to me.

My brother was being graduated from the University of Wisconsin before our school closed. I was permitted to take examinations early in order to join my family at his commencement. When I went to tell Sister Rita goodbye she gave me an inscribed copy of *The Story of Fifty Years*, her own history of the Sisters of the Holy Cross. All the way on the train to Madison I read it like a starved person. Afterward, Mother told me that when I got off the train, despite my huge Merry Widow hat and smart clothes, she knew that I no longer belonged to them.

We dripped home by ones or twos from Madison, grandmother's and other tangential trips. I went up the lake to our cottage with our inseparable crowd of girls. I waited breathlessly for a letter from Sister Augustine. Finally it came. In substance, her instructions read that if I still thought as I did when last talking to her, I should write to Mother Barbara, the mistress of novices. This I did, telling her that I should like to enter the novitiate if and when she wished. These alternatives I volunteered: I might return to finish college. I might stay home for the

year with my parents. I might finish school, stay home a year, and then enter. I might come at once. Or I might do none of these things. My absolute wish was to become a Sister of the Holy Cross. The decision she would make for me.

She wrote me to come at once, on September fourteenth specifically, and sent me a list of questions to answer. I mailed my reply on the feast of Saint Augustine, August thirtieth. I had two weeks in which to get ready.

IX

September 14, 1908

SUCH a wardrobe for a girl who had lived for clothes! And such subterfuges in buying black cashmere shawls and petticoats! Finally, the humorous little trousseau was in order. Not so my family! My father, not a Catholic, was sick with dismay. What had he done to me that I should want to leave him! Mother had too much of the fear of the Lord in her conscience to permit even a question. Fred felt himself treated as a rank outsider. This was the first major decision in my life that he had not shared. Vern was young and quiet and, I think, the nearest to being pleased.

My friends knew nothing of my plans. I thought that I would go, ostensibly back to school. I was almost sure that although I had been accepted in the novitiate I would probably be sent home. It might be better for my pride if dismissal came from the college rather than from the convent. I had refused ultrasocial invitations to house parties and the like; solicitous boy friends were more than curious as to my reasons. I would give them only half-answers. Late in the summer I put on my prettiest dress which Sister Cyril had made for the senior ball at Wisconsin. All blue voile and taffeta I went to my last dance with Vern. Only he and I knew that it was a valedictory.

September thirteenth was a bleak day. We were a bleak family. Neither my deep nor my superficial joy could buoy them up. Traintime came and I was off. I cried in the Pullman most of the night at my father's helpless grief and Fred's blunt reproaches. Arrived at the Northwestern station in Chicago I ran over to the desk and wrote hurriedly:

Dear Papa,

If you want me to I will come home.

Sis

Before the letter could have reached him I was the gayest of postulants, having really come home.

Chicago almost undid me. The Saint Mary's girls were getting back to school. In my own great preoccupation I had forgotten that this was opening day. Half of my crowd were at the LaSalle Street station. We went down to South Bend together on the New York Central. But the questions! How much food was I bringing back? From whom had I heard? How had I spent the summer? Evasion characterized my answers to these and like queries.

In South Bend I had to buy two pairs of high black-laced shoes—I whose heart was in my regiment of assorted pumps and low shoes! How could I explain my new footwear to the crowd! Somehow I got a taxi to myself and drove to the shoe store and from there to the novitiate. Mother Barbara received me graciously. God had begun to answer my question. This was the fourteenth of September, the feast of the Holy Cross. I was going to be a Sister of the Holy Cross.

Canon Law was not as explicit then as now. I received the Holy Habit on December tenth and became Sister Mary Madeleva. My father humorously suggested "Model-Eva." The honor of bearing a combination of the names of the Mother of God, Magdalen, the friend of Christ, and Eve, the mother of mankind has always impressed me deeply. Father and mother came for the reception, fully expecting to take me home. Completely charmed and converted by their welcome, they spontaneously took Saint Mary's and our entire community to their hearts for life. I can think of no one who has loved us more.

I had been wearing my Holy Habit less than a month when Mother Barbara called me and asked if I thought I could teach a second academic class in English. Anticipating my life as a religious in the convent I had wondered what in the world the community could ever do with me. I was sure that I could scarcely wash dishes or sweep a floor well enough to be allowed to do either in the convent. I had never thought of being a teacher of any kind. But my answer to Mother was, "I will do my best." "You always do your best," she encouraged abruptly. I chronicle this as my one and only word of praise from her. Novices will appreciate its value.

The next morning, in a room before students, with books that I had never seen, I began teaching English.

The two years in the novitiate were devoted to the religious life: prayer, meditation, Mass, vocal prayers, the study and explanation of our Rules and Constitutions, all traditional and fairly standard in all communities. Meditation is an intellectual and spiritual activity that I

have always loved. Whatever my imperfections in it, and they are many, it has never put me to sleep.

Studying our Rule took me straight back to the Rule of Saint Benedict on which I had written a term paper. Something more apocalyptic awaited me. At home we had an old German Lutheran Bible which my grandmother had brought from Europe. My father treasured it. Except for this I had never had a Bible in my hands. Mother Barbara took a small group of us for Scripture study. Fred sent me a Challoner-Douay Bible, which I still have, for Christmas. For two years we knew the joy of living with and loving God's words to us in that priceless class. I have much for which to thank my mistress of novices. For her Scripture class I think I owe the greatest debt.

Father had had garden tools and flower seeds sent out to us from South Bend. With these we gardened during noon recreations. I used to say that I planted all my uncharitable conversations in our little plots. Spading, raking, hoeing have their values both for sanctity and sanity. Weeds are a fruitful subject for meditation.

Because of my brief period as a postulant I remained in the novitiate eight months after the end of my canonical first year. At the end of August, 1910, I exchanged my white veil for a black one and was sent to the convent to teach in the college and academy.

X

Teachers and Teaching

Sister Rita died of cancer just after midnight on the morning of July twenty-third. It comforted me that she had stayed on to the end of the feast of Saint Mary Magdalen. She had sent word that she had almost gone to God that day to pray for me. She was just fifty. We had planned hours and walks together when my novitiate would be over. I am still waiting. I never knew her in the intimacies of community life. She remains still my dream-lady after all my seventy years. If she had them, I never saw her feet of clay.

Within that year, Sister Eleanore, the head of the philosophy department, and Sister Virginia, head of our voice department, died. They were three great teachers, three unforgettable women. All went to God with characteristic expedition, even shocking suddenness. They left no one to approximate their statures. I was in the process of completing my senior class work. Classes in college English were being assigned me. Then classes in philosophy. By 1914 I was teaching juniors and seniors

in English and philosophy. I was twenty-seven years old. By 1919 my repertoire included Scripture and contemporary fiction. Then I was sent on mission. Before changing the subject I want to say in praise of myself that at that mature age I introduced Dante and Newman's *The Idea of a University* into our curriculum.

Mother Pauline educated greatly in the magnitude of her aspirations for Saint Mary's and the quality of the teachers she invited to help her realize her dreams. In her hour of faculty bereavement great friends met the needs of the college. For a fortnight every year Dr. James J. Walsh lectured daily to the entire student body. We who sat at his feet still turn to him for information on everything that happened in the thirteenth century, America's first hospitals, and Dante.

For a like period Frederick Paulding, actor and critic, gave us at least one play or one contemporary novel a day. The actor presented the drama; the critic appraised it. So through the years we came to know the best of English, French, Italian, Russian and Spanish drama and fiction. If you were ever in his audience you remember the gloved elegance with which he presented the first fifteen minutes of his program. The removal of his gloves, he used to tell us, marked the beginning of real work.

William Baxter Perry, the blind pianist, cousin of Bliss Perry, performed and interpreted music in terms of colors, textures, contours that he had never seen. His sightless vision brought sight to our minds and ears.

During one summer Charles Seymour was guest lecturer in history. In those days he was professor at the University of Wisconsin. I can still quote sections of his lectures on Charlemagne and the Palace School. Because I was young and fairly responsible I had the privilege of bringing Professor Seymour to and from his lectures and providing him a collation of buttermilk. In 1935, when taking one of our sisters to Yale for graduate work, we reminisced in his office on his buttermilk days at Saint Mary's.

In 1911 a new religious community came into the life of the Church, dedicated at that time to the apostolate of the Orient. Father, later Bishop James Walsh came to Saint Mary's to interest our students in his great mission. Again, as his official escort, I shared his friendship until his death. Remembering his graciousness, his greatness and humility, I am happy at our grateful return in the splendid Saint Mary's girls who now wear the Maryknoll habit.

Under Father William Bolger, the University of Notre Dame had developed an outstanding debating team. Father McGuire, a brilliant Oxford graduate, teaching at St. Viator's College at Bourbonnais, Illi-

nois, had a team of matching brilliance. They used to meet at the University for finals, putting on their preliminary battle of brains and wit for the Saint Mary's students. We young sisters were usually asked to act as judges. Here through at least three college years we listened to young Fulton Sheen. Even then we prophesied a brilliant future. We could not have guessed its magnitude or its holiness.

Katherine E. Conway grew up in Rochester, New York. As a girl she used to kneel beside young George Santayana in church. She had the rare experience and training of working with and for Bishop McQuade. She knew the rigor of his mind. She learned from him the ideals of the educated Catholic, the pattern of a great American clergy. Few girls in their early twenties have been so fortunate. Once she submitted to the Bishop a bit of writing into which she had grafted a bit of French. He handed the manuscript back to her with the crisp comment, "My dear, you will never have an idea that you cannot express in English."

Among her reasons for going to Boston, two predominated. She wanted to write and she wanted to work for the intellectual life of the Church. Very soon her purposes and her personality asserted themselves. Book-review groups, study clubs grew up. Her own essays and poems got between boards. She lived for a time in the home of Louise Imogene Guiney. Here was a friendship of consequence. One day Louise brought home a check for one hundred dollars for an article that had just come out in the *Atlantic Monthly*. "That's a nice fat check, Louise," commented the literally poor Katherine. "Yes," replied Louise, "I read two hundred books to prepare the article and waited two years to have it published."

Eventually and for years Katherine was editor of the *Boston Pilot*. When John F. Fitzgerald became Mayor of Boston he invited her to manage and edit his paper. She accepted and continued in this capacity during all the years that "Honey Fitz" had need of this editorial service. Some of these were spent at Saint Mary's.

Miss Conway came into residence on our campus in 1912 as lecturer in Church history, Scripture, contemporary literature. She brought her lares and penates with her. These hung in photograph in her office, her household gods: Clarence Warren Stedman, John Boyle O'Reilly, James Jeffry Roache, Rose Hawthorne Lathrop among them. She was built into this group and remained one of them until her death.

Again, a cupbearer of the gods in a minor sense, I accompanied Miss Conway to and from class, took care of such messages and errands as she had need of. Walking with her, talking with her daily, reading proof, commenting on editorials, listening to her analysis of the Balkan and

the First World War crises, I served a rich apprenticeship, such as few young teachers have known.

Rose Fitzgerald and Joseph Kennedy were married while she was at Saint Mary's. With a delicious appetite for romance, she savored vicariously the beatitudes of these nuptials. They could hardly have had richer fulfillment.

When Miss Conway left Saint Mary's in 1916, not to return, I found myself heir to her classes in Scripture and literature. The mantles of both Sister Rita and Miss Conway had fallen on my shoulders. I was not yet thirty. Young sisters are not necessarily either helpless or hopeless.

On a bright October afternoon Father John Cavanaugh (the elder) came to the college with a young English convert and a bodyguard of lesser celebrities. The guest of honor was Monsignor Robert Hugh Benson. For an hour he talked to us on the elements of truth that give content and credibility to non-Catholic and non-Christian beliefs. The lecture over, we left the hall, silent, caught in the intensities of personality and conviction that reassert themselves even in our memories of that hour. We could not "come to" even with our closest friends.

Here again I was sent to take Monsignor Benson around such parts of the college as might interest him. He followed my youthful guidance with polite absent-mindedness. The less either of us had to say at that moment surely was the better. Only, as a woman, I remember his shiny cassock, his loose slippers, the black cotton socks with narrow white stripes running zebra-wise around his ankles. What curious nonessentials stick in our memories!

He was to have returned for a series of Lenten lectures in New York and then to have come on to us for a retreat. He died of pneumonia in England in early December.

The impact of his mind, his conviction remain in the body of his historical novels and his novels of the future. Our present world crises and their ominous possibilities are all written down in his *Lord of the World* and *The Dawn of All.*

If Saint Mary's could recall today those first fifteen years of the present century it would find Christian Culture at the very core of its curriculum.

XI

Great Things and Small

ONLY in long retrospect does one know and begin to understand the import of daily incidentals and unnoted odds through which the big ends of one's life are reached.

I had made my first profession, or temporary vows as we said then, on December 10, 1910. Fred had sent me a dozen lilies for my first Easter in the novitiate. White roses came for my first vows. One can say things with flowers!

Now one absolute theme dominated life. I would, if permitted, make my religious profession in the summer of 1914. It was a time of utmost earnestness, of ultimate giving and receiving for me. Our preparation was careful. Fifteen of us were to make our final profession before Holy Mass on August fifteenth.

The day was beautiful. Father and mother had come, now happy with and for me. When a young person, in a short, succinct formula, gives to God by vows pronounced in public, her whole life with all its promise, all its possibilities, little room is left for commentary. I had done this. I had given away everything that I had, or ever could have or be. I had come to the final answer. I had found out why God had made me. For Him and His reasons I had begun to be.

In 1915 I was permitted to make my first visit home with Sister Fredrica, my German teacher, for companion. We stopped in Watertown to greet my Lutheran grandmother. She found great joy in having a dear little Berliner to speak German to her. In Cumberland, the devout Italians kissed our hands, the Chippewa Indians brought us wild berries.

In this and all subsequent visits we picked up friendships where we had left off at our last partings. Few loyalties can match the bonds and allegiances of one's home town. Cumberland has never failed me.

The summer of 1916 I spent with the Sisters of Saint Joseph at their summer home on Lake George. One of our sisters and I were their guests. Eddie Maginn, now the Most Reverend Edward Maginn of Albany, ran the motorboat for us. Perhaps he remembers matching sonnets with me.

Father Thomas Verner Moore, just returned from Europe, was living at the Paulist House, a quarter mile away. He and Eddie piloted us on great hikes up Prospect Mountain. Although we never did quite reach the top of the mountain, Father discovered other heights of wonder and beauty to us which more than compensated. You may recognize

our guest as the eminent psychologist, now Fra. Pablo, a pioneer Carthusian in Whitingham, Vermont.

Biennially, at least, I was permitted to visit my parents. This afforded en route the hospitality of the Sisters of Saint Francis in La Crosse, Wisconsin, and Winona and Rochester, Minnesota; the Visitation Nuns in Saint Paul; the Sisters of Saint Joseph at Saint Catherine's College; the good Benedictines at Saint Scholastica's in Duluth. These colleges I have watched grow to rich maturity with an almost maternal pride.

Usually, we either went home or returned by way of the Great Lakes. "Nuns fret not at their convent's narrow room."

Multitudinous small odds one must read between all these lines. The young sister is a magnet for jobs of many kinds. Besides a heavy and mature teaching schedule I usually carried additional and exacting loads of writing, sponsoring student publications, class organizations. Even with these, two bigger and better extracurricular activities consumed the best of my own personal intellectual life.

Four of us young sisters had been assigned to study for our Master's degrees at the University of Notre Dame. These we received in June, 1918. The experience, for all the pressures of ways and means, amounted to mental luxury.

Young Father Charles O'Donnell, a Holy Cross priest of fine scholarship and poetic gifts, was assigned to teach a summer course in creative writing at Saint Mary's. His small class numbered chiefly former Saint Mary's girls who had entered the community and were not yet professed. By way of exploration, he assigned us a sonnet to write. After class, he said to me, "If you can do this you must have written other verse. Let me see some." The next day he took my few simple lyrics and sent them to the *Atlantic Monthly*.

Since that time I have been writing and publishing verse on a slightly different basis. Two rules I set for myself at the very beginning. I would publish under my religious name. I would submit my work first to secular rather than to Catholic magazines. I had heard so much about Catholics being unable to receive recognition because they were Catholics. I resolved not to permit mediocrity in my writing to be attributed to my religion. As a Catholic and a sister I would write well enough for acceptance by the secular press, or I would not write at all. The old *Bookman*, now discontinued, published some of my first verse. *American Mercury*, *Saturday Review of Literature*, and the New York *Times* have accepted my small output.

For this same reason my manuscripts for books have been submitted first to secular publishers. Appleton-Century and Macmillan accepted these immediately. Having laid the ghost of rampant discrimination

against Catholic writers I got into my own Church and my own pew. The *Catholic World*, *The Ave Maria* and *Spirit* have been very kind to me. Saint Anthony Guild Press and Sheed & Ward have more than matched them.

I write these things for what possible help they may provide to young religious more gifted and less enterprising than myself. They can scarcely be more fortunate in friendships. More than once Joyce Kilmer came with Father O'Donnell to visit. They shared with me their clear, incisive poetic insights. Their minds were quick with poems waiting to be written. The importunities of war pressed. Both men volunteered for service. Both went overseas. Joyce was killed in action on July 30, 1918, near Ourcq in France and buried beside a stream that bears the same name. Father blessed his grave before coming home. Aline, his wife, and I corresponded occasionally until her death. The children, Sister Michael, the Benedictine daughter, and Kenton with his artist-wife and children I prize as friends.

Given these and other almost equally stimulating contacts, relationships, the hungry reading of poetry for beauty's sake, the constant, restive desire amounting to an imperative need to write, with no time, no leisure, no freedom from the pressure of persons and things, what was I to do?

My subconsciousness must have had a multitude of occupations. Intellectual and emotional impacts were intense. Living in boarding school provided no outlets. Insomnia came as a solution. A sonnet and a short lyric good enough for immediate publication were not infrequently the fruit of one sleepless night. Exhaustion was inevitable.

And then on the night of the feast of Saint Ann, 1918, I was taken by ambulance to Saint Joseph Hospital for an emergency appendectomy. Peritonitis and no sulfas left small margin for recovery. But after seven weeks I got into my shoes, learned to walk again, and returned to school.

In August, 1919, my good superiors sent me on mission to Sacred Heart Academy, Ogden, Utah. I was elated. Mountains at last! Deserts, sagebrush, the West! Oh, pioneers!

XII

The West and I

THE theory of religious life submits the proverb that the happiness of a convent depends on the superior and the cooks. Sisters Celsus, Anicetus, and Felicitas put halos around this proverb. With them in these key

positions, Sacred Heart Academy in Ogden became my happiest mission.

Among our hundred and twenty boarders, fewer than thirty were Catholic. Most of them were Mormon children. In Ogden, the Mormons placed major emphasis on the arts. They sent their daughters to convent schools for these. Consequently, ballet and interpretive dancing comprised our entire program in physical education which concluded with an ambitious pageant at the end of every school year. Practically everyone studied at least one musical instrument. I have attended concerts by our students at the old Salt Lake City Theater with seven harps on the stage for ensemble numbers. Speech and drama flourished. Our high school students regularly presented Yeats, Synge, Lady Gregory, contemporary American plays. They gave a fine out-of-door production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. I found more than mountains and sagebrush in Ogden.

On my first errand downtown I stopped at Spargo's Drug and Bookstore. Bernard De Voto, a junior at Harvard, was working there for the summer. Mother Augusta, one of the Sisters of the Holy Cross who nursed soldiers of North and South during the Civil War, was at its close in 1865 in charge of a hospital in Cairo, Illinois. On leaving there she brought with her the two De Voto children, Flo and Rose, orphaned by the war. Flo she had sent through law school at the University of Notre Dame; Rose was graduated in music at Saint Mary's.

When Mother Augusta went to Utah in 1875 she urged these two brilliant young students to join her. Flo began law practice in Ogden where he remained all his life. Here he married and here Bernard was born. The first eight years of his school life he spent at Sacred Heart Academy. He had the questionable distinction of being the only little boy admitted to this select academy for young ladies. I cannot say that Bernard relished the privilege. When I met him he was in the process of achieving Harvard's intellectual maturity and writing the first of his novels.

The plans of more than one of his projected books we took apart and put together again across the bookstore counter at different times during my years in Ogden. Through all his turbulence of mind and soul we remained friends. He wrote me once, "I am one of that unhappy band whose minds refuse the allegiance without which their hearts will never be at rest." His last letter came a matter of weeks before his death.

Gladys Rich, a graduate of the academy and a gifted musician, was at this time the president of our alumnae association, with Jule Kiesel McGinley our most indescribable exponent. Jule outmeasured types and standards. She explains, in part at least, her daughter Phyllis. What rewards they were for each other!

Phyllis and Gladys, sorority sisters at the University of Utah, spent

hours of their vacations at the Academy. Far after convent hours, we raced into Phyllis' smart verse, played and hummed through musical comedies done in collaboration for university song fests or future classroom programs. *The Good Ship School, The Pink Huzzar, Lullabies from Many Lands* were all in the making then, some at least to be published by Schirmer later. Phyllis' gay, heady gift troubled me. I was almost afraid to tell her how good it was. I hesitated to recommend the *Smart Set* as an avenue of publication. But she was Jule Kiesel's daughter. I need not have worried.

One pretty afternoon Mary Matson came to my classroom with her brother Mark and Jimmie Keller, his roommate, visiting him from Saint Mary's College, Oakland, now Morago County. Mary and I, as student and teacher, friend and friend, have shared many fine things. Jimmie Keller is one. We had a happy afternoon, falling easily into the pattern of college talk. Weeks later Mary rushed into my classroom again with a letter which she thrust into my hand with "Read it, Sister." I did. Its story runs briefly thus:

> Dear Mary,
>
> I have been thinking a good deal lately. We have only three score and ten years to spend in this business called life. I have decided to invest mine in the stocks that pay the highest dividends. I am going to Maryknoll.
>
> Sincerely,
>
> Jim

Already you may have recognized in this keen young appraiser of stocks and bonds the future Father James Keller, M.M. and founder of the Christophers.

You may wonder when between these delectable interludes I taught anybody anything. Be assured that even then I attempted, as I still say facetiously, to work twenty-five hours out of twenty-four. Recently a former Ogden student visited Saint Mary's. For all her earnest study while at school she found the intellectual life most difficult. Wisely, she wrote me in her bread-and-butter letter after her visit, "Sister, don't worry about the grades your students receive. Wait thirty or forty years and then ask them what you taught them. They will remember."

My first Ogden vacation I spent with my parents for what seemed a necessary rest. The second summer Mother Perpetua, Sister Rita's dearest friend, invited me for her sake to Saint Agnes Convent, Los Angeles. Here I taught a bit to justify my traveling expenses; I read *The Love Letters of Elizabeth and Robert Browning.* I wrote poems on "The Pepper Tree," and other verse still surviving in my *Collected*

Poems. I spent the fourth of July at Carmel. St. Catherine of Siena had already told me something of the "Sea Pacific." Here I had the wonder of the Pacific Ocean at my feet.

In the spring of 1922 Sister Celsus, still my religious superior, told me that I was to go to the University of California, Berkeley, for a summer session of graduate work in English.

XIII

"Sudden the Worst Turns the Best"

BY CHOICE, I registered for a Chaucer course to be taught by John Livingston Lowes, rare teacher and rare friend from Harvard. By the worst of mistakes, I blundered into a seminar of Nineteenth Century Ideas, the only subject in the program that I knew I did not want. Professor Benjamin H. Lehman, brilliant young student-friend of Professor Lowes, was teaching the course.

Arriving at the right room on the wrong day, I found the place packed. I squeezed in. Professor Lehman arrived. "Obviously," he said, "we shall have to begin by eliminating. Auditors must go first. How many have Bachelor's degrees?" I raised my hand. "Master's degrees?" Again, I raised my hand. By this time the survivors did not constitute a crowd. "How many are working for Doctor's degrees?" Without knowing whether I was or not, and with an impulsion quite outside my will, I raised my hand. I—medievalist by every attraction—had got myself into Nineteenth Century Ideas.

We were less than a dozen students at the final screening. Our whole summer's business consisted in selecting a proper subject and submitting it in a proper paper for discussion, revision, and possible survival. Discussion meant literary surgery, acute, caustic, penetrating. My paper had been scheduled for the first session of the fourth week of school. There might have prevailed some slight curiosity as to the kind of paper a nun would turn in. For me, the three weeks of waiting were an unmitigated reign of terror. I had been away from college for three years, away from its manner of thought and speech. My three weeks in the seminar had been exacting. Every graduate student knows the story. I was among strangers.

I had selected for my subject, "The Prose of Francis Thompson as Transitional from Coventry Patmore to Gilbert K. Chesterton." My confreres in Nineteenth Century Ideas knew not one of these great captains of thought. The afternoon for my paper came. For thirty min-

utes I read on without interruption. The bell rang. I stopped. "Go on," said Professor Lehman. After a bit I interrupted myself to apologize for keeping the class overtime. "We are willing to stay," I was assured.

When I had finished Professor Lehman said, "This paper is practically ready for publication. I could not have done it," and dismissed the class.

This was the year during which Professor Lowes was immersed in his great work, *The Road to Xanadu*. Like Mary's lamb, wherever Chaucer went, Coleridge went, too. For my particular job in research a study of Chaucer's Nuns from inside the convent seemed ideal and opportune. Here again my paper was pronounced ready for publication when Professor Lowes returned it to me.

During the year the entire output of my first summer session at Berkeley had earned its living through publication in various issues of the *Catholic World*. My mission was changed from Ogden to Woodland, California, just three hours' train ride from Berkeley. Signs began to point to continued graduate work. But not without a severe tertianship at Holy Rosary Academy with Mother Barbara for my superior.

The Berkeley Summer Session Bulletin arrived in early March, 1923. Henry Seidel Canby was to conduct a program in critical writing for a group not to exceed twelve. Applicants would be chosen on the merits of published or unpublished work. No applications would be considered after April fifth.

During the past years I had got my accumulating verse together under the title *Knights Errant and Other Poems*, had sent it off to Appleton's who had accepted it. Mother Barbara had always encouraged me to write. The Appleton approval pleased her. No one needed help less than she in deciding what any of her household was to do at any time. Consequently, I had not mentioned the attractive Berkeley program to her. She asked me. Mr. Canby's course she thought most geared to my possibilities. I pointed out that the application was already two weeks late. Nevertheless, she told me to apply.

What with two critical articles published within the year and a book of verse in galley proof, I was admitted to the course.

Our group of twelve made headlines in the campus publications the summer long. Papini's *Life of Christ*, Gertrude Atherton's *Black Oxen*, Eleanor Wylie's *Black Armour*, Edna St. Vincent Millay's *The Harp Weaver and Other Poems* all came out that summer. Some of the books we read before they got between boards.

Our job consisted in selecting three books each, reading and writing a critical review of each of them. With a list of a dozen books just coming off the press we would produce about three reviews of each from which to choose the best. Mr. Canby read them aloud. The class criti-

cized and then chose what they considered might eventually appear in a hypothetical critical literary weekly. This was the *Saturday Review* aborning. Our seminar provided the incubator. The class chose all three of my criticisms for the unborn magazine.

When my article on Edna Millay, "Where Are You Going, My Pretty Maid," came out, Bernard De Voto wrote me pages of congratulation. The Catholic mind had found a nun for an exponent. The first critical article on Edna Millay had appeared. This pleased Bernard, sensitive and unnecessarily embarrassed over Catholic illiteracies of all sorts.

I had planned a comparative study of Emily Dickinson, Edna Millay and Eleanor Wylie and had completed the reading when time ran out. I have often regretted missing so golden an opportunity. The Dickinson revival had not yet begun.

For two years I commuted from Woodland to Berkeley in a breathless biweekly schedule. During my final year I lived in San Francisco and crossed the bay in the dear obsolete ferryboat every day. That in itself, with sea gulls, impenetrable fogs, the tang of the Pacific, irrepressible student passengers from the other side of the bay, provided surcease from the spasms of panic, the chronic "if I fail" state of mind which all but overwhelmed my waking hours. One hurdle after another was taken. Examinations were finally over, my dissertation approved. The Appleton-Century Company had already accepted it. Otherwise the University of California had volunteered to publish it. The fact that Benjamin Kurtz had written the foreword caused a bit of an academic breeze. I was informed that before my advent he had never admitted a sister to any of his classes. More than one letter to me he signed "Your professorial sinner." The three-hour public oral examination was in those days the last and worst of all the academic game. Until that feast of Saint George, 1925, no sister had qualified for a Doctor's degree at Berkeley. My orals must have occasioned some curiosity. When I came into the room with my committee even the hall outside was crowded.

In commending me afterward, one professor said, "The thing that came through to all of us most clearly was that you were sustained by something beyond mere academic competence." Looking back now, all seems to have moved in quiet, ordered inevitability. The business of living through day after unpredictable day as an intellectual and ascetic experience makes wearing pebbles in one's shoes a fairly comfortable alternative.

Saying goodbye, my professors asked what I planned to do now. "Go home and save my soul," came the prompt reply. Then I enlarged: "You may have thought that being out of my convent on a big co-educational

campus was quite a lark. Nothing in these past years has been so hard as separation from my community, my sisters, my proper life."

One dear old professor who had at times been quite a gadfly to me pulled my sleeve and confided, "I think I understand." This was April 23, the feast of Saint George. Other dragons might be lying in wait, but not today. California was a heaven of peach and almond blossoms. How could I have written a whole big book, a dissertation on *Pearl: A Study in Spiritual Dryness*. The Dark Night had passed.

For more than thirty years I have lived away from Berkeley and far from California. In 1949 my Alma Mater invited me to lecture at summer session. I was welcomed back with such gentilities of culture as only Ben Lehman and Guy Montgomery could command. Even more recently, old teachers and new have shared tea and the luxuries of reminiscences with me, Professor Lehman again being our perfect host.

Two years ago in Los Angeles the English faculty of the graduate school of the University of Southern California invited me to a charming luncheon and an afternoon on campus. All this came as a courtesy from a sister graduate school to a graduate of Berkeley.

Crossing the bay for the last time in the dear old ferryboat, I wrote a valedictory which I called "Patrins." In it I tried to say goodbye for many goods. These are the first lines of my attempt:

> "Yes, I shall leave these patrins as I go:
> Plucked grasses here, a few blown blossoms there,
> To tell you, though I've gone, how much I care;
> To tell you, also, should you want to know,
> The way I've taken, my beloved, so
> That you can find me, find me anywhere."

So, here I am, Berkeley.

XIV

On Incubating a College

ON AN early morning in September, 1926, you might have seen the recently qualified Doctor of Philosophy from Berkeley piled in among the first load of furniture going up to our new school on the east bench of the Wasatch Range, two miles from Salt Lake City. The old Saint Mary's Academy, once in the finest residential section of the city, was no longer safe or suitable for a boarding school for girls. The intermountain area needed a Catholic college for women, Bishop Glass argued.

At his advice, this most majestic of sites was purchased and an imposing college built. Just a week before the opening of classes we began the transplanting.

Out of many comedies of many errors we gradually arrived at solutions. My problem was to create a college where no college had ever been. We began with the library. Before we had the windows and the books in the section assigned to the library we had invited to our faculty the best librarian we could find in the West. This precedent has become a law of the school. We assigned to our classes in religion the first and best hour of the day. We set up a program of school officers and such form of student government as the students themselves supported. We published our program of extracurricular activities well in advance each semester.

Every Sunday afternoon we served tea from two to five for all the household and any guests who happened to call. Frequently, we walked in groups up the mountainside and back, returning in the evening to make hot chocolate in the social hall before going to bed. More frequently, we read aloud from Ogden Nash, P. G. Wodehouse, *Green Pastures*, and such gay comedy. Many of our girls were musically gifted. There were few songs for which someone could not improvise piano and violin accompaniments. Capitalizing on the smallness of our college, we could have waffle breakfasts with no trouble at all. Often and often we hiked up the mountains, built our fires and cooked Denver sandwiches in the snow. The amenities of our lives would have been impossible almost anywhere else.

Our faculty was better than good. In a national science contest open to all college freshmen, our three contestants won a first, a second prize, and an honorable mention out of a total of eighteen awards. In the state board examinations for teachers' licenses, our students ranked highest in the state. In a student body of fifty, seven read the entire *Beowulf* in Old English with me and liked it. We wrote and produced our own musical comedies: *Twenty-one Eves and an Adam*, and *China Blue*. We presented the best trilogy of English mystery plays that I have ever seen. Our other dramatic productions matched these in quality and taste.

A large and rare collection of European art, assembled by Bishop Glass and housed at the college, made the school an art museum.

Lew Sarett and Louis Untermeyer visited and talked with us of poetry. Seumas MacManus spent more than one fortnight bringing us the authentic and all-but-lost epic art of the shanachie. When lecturing at the University of Utah, Professor Lehman shared his gifts of critical thought with us also. His appointment as Bishop of Great Falls brought that dearest of all friends, Bishop Edwin O'Hara, to the West. He came to

the Wasatch frequently with problems of educational organizations, of nursing education, of Confraternity of Christian Doctrine study clubs. Every visit was an event. The University of Utah collaborated with us at all times, providing teachers, sharing guest-artists, inviting us to participate in its programs.

One of our students had entered as a junior from the University. This meant that we had our first college graduate in 1928. If there had been a class of one hundred instead of one the program could not have been planned with more dignity. Baccalaureate Mass in the beautiful Cathedral of the Madeleine, academic procession, the investing in the Bachelor's hood, and conferring of the degree all unfolded in medieval pageantry the life of the mind. Faye Eliza Williams was the first to receive a Bachelor's degree from the newly-founded college. Today, she is among its best-loved alumnae.

Very early in the spring of 1933, Mother Vincentia, our Superior General, wrote instructing me to be ready to leave for Europe the following summer. I was to spend a year observing and studying colleges for women abroad. Term times, if possible, should be kept for Oxford. In late May, I said my farewells to our infant college.

Seven of the best years of my life had been invested there. We had often been cold, sometimes hungry. Coyotes had cried under our windows at night. Water shortages had left us parched and unwashed during all but unbearable months in summer. Once at least every winter we were snowed in, cut off completely from Salt Lake City by wind-driven mountain snows. Days at a time we lived literally in the clouds and above the clouds. We watched weather in the making: rivers of sand flowed for days across Salt Lake Valley; canyon contours changed entirely as cloudbursts hurled mountainsides of shattered rock into them. We followed the silver path of the sun in its setting behind the mountains beyond Great Salt Lake. After its long rose-colored afterglow, two firmaments awoke in the darkness: the stars above us and the twinkling lights of Salt Lake City and its five suburbs covering the valley below.

Most magic of all was the mystery of full moonrise over our high eastern horizon, prefaced by a half hour of heralding light, then the moon a silver line, a quickly growing surface, a completed sphere. While watching this phenomenon of magnitude and splendor we caught something of our own dizzy daily journeyings around and around. I have watched moonrise on the Great Lakes, on sea and ocean. Full moon over the Wasatch mountains always answers in an enchanted affirmative my question, "Do I love mountains better than oceans?"

The western parks—Yellowstone, Bryce, Zion, Grand Canyon—were within easy driving distance from the college. We took groups of stu-

dents to at least one of these each summer. What an exchange of campus, classrooms and books! Yellowstone the very fulfillment of Scriptural text: Wisdom, playing in the world: whose delights were to be with the children of men. Only God could make such a playground.

Just outside the west gate the unforgettable Tetons bit high horizons into the blue with their grim gray mountains. The Snake River ran clear and ice-cold at their feet.

Bryce was another of wisdom's playgrounds for children of men, wind-carved into a myriad majestic forms from buff and tawny and burnt orange sandstone.

We stood dwarfed and impotent before the majesty of Zion, its great white throne, its altar of sacrifice. No one tries to find words for Grand Canyon. Each time we returned to this tremendous wonder, we paid it the same perfect tribute of silence. Always in the parks, the desert, the mountains we found ourselves at school in the original and best sense of the word: at leisure to learn and to be taught. For seven years, Saint Mary-of-the-Wasatch was more than a school, more than a convent, more than a home to me. It was my self. It will always be difficult for me to think objectively of it.

XV

I Enter Oxford

TWO facts were pretty clear in our minds. We were to spend a year in Europe, Sister Verda Clare at the Sorbonne perfecting her French, I at Oxford perfecting my English. We each had one thousand dollars. When that was gone we were to come home. In our devices to economize we laughingly proposed cutting our postage stamps in two.

From two apparent casualties resulted the two major joys of my year. We missed our first and best boat reservation. This committed us to the *Aurania*, sailing from Toronto on September 1. Madge Vaison, the secretary of Charles Du Bos, the prince of French intellectuals, was on board. Immediately she looked us up. Immediately we entered upon one of my happiest friendships. We talked, walked, prayed together until Sister and I landed at Plymouth. There Madge's clerical cousin directed us to a convent for lodgings. On the earlier boat that we had planned none of this would have happened. Now it is difficult to imagine my life without the dear love of Madge and her family, the profound affection of Charles Du Bos and all that his thinking, his teaching have

meant to Saint Mary's, to Notre Dame and to me. Accidents are so often God's way of being doubly good to us.

After a night and a day in Plymouth we went by bus to Exeter for another day, then on to Buckfast where we sat in the chair of Abbot Vonier, to Torquay, to London. We arrived at 11 Cavendish Square about nine o'clock the evening of September 13, the vigil of the feast of the Holy Cross. By nine in the morning we were on a tuppenny bus for the Haymarket, Westminster Hall, Westminster Cathedral, returning to the convent after having seen in our first three hours more of London than some of the sisters had seen in years. Sunday we drove through Hyde Park, Kensington, Kew Gardens, to Richmond. While falling short in my appraisal of its historical realities I did understand its world of Michaelmas daisies. Every garden spot was banked with them.

We left by train for Canterbury. Here were Chaucer, Saint Thomas à Becket, Dickens, Joseph Conrad, the graves of Saint Augustine and Queen Bertha, Christian England measured in a span. We left by train to Dover, on to Calais, to Brussels. Liège, Louvain, and Aachen were meccas each in its own right. Cologne was restive and terrified. Troops of children drilled in the streets after school. One asked questions in whispers, fearing that even then, in 1933, the walls had ears. Loving German hospitality, the kind sisters, the dear children who took our hands and kissed our crucifixes, we were, nevertheless, glad to reach Paris where things were less ominous.

Here, presently, we were at 4 Rue des Deux Ponts on the Ile St.-Louis. We were at the home of Charles Du Bos. Here you must permit me the luxury of a digression for what has become the very warp of my life.

> "Charles Du Bos, gentle and accomplished man of letters, with his charming wife, Zezette, lived on the Ile St.-Louis, in beautiful rooms overlooking the Seine and the Choir of Notre-Dame. There at carefully selected gatherings, small tea parties or smaller luncheons, I met many well-known authors, poets, novelists, and literary celebrities of every sort. For, somewhat like Nadia Boulanger, Du Bos has devoted his life to his enthusiasm for the work of others. François Mauriac, Paul Valéry, André Gide, Paul Bourget, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Rainer Maria Rilke, and a host of others were all his good friends, and held his opinion in high esteem. What good talk there was and how pleasant to listen to, while the river flowed under the bridges gleaming in the afternoon light as the spires and buttresses of Notre-Dame grew darker against the western sky."

This paragraph from *Autumn in the Valley* by Mrs. Winthrop Chanler epitomizes the manner and life and work of this rare scholar who has

come to be accepted as one of the finest critical minds of our time.

Charles Du Bos was by vocation a lover of letters, a disciple of words, as of the Word. In all surroundings, he gravitated naturally and always to the deep seriousness of the student. This over the period of a lifetime resulted in the profound acquirements of the scholar. The scope and penetration of his learning were its obvious dimensions. Holiness was its essence. The story of all this will some day be unique biography. Meanwhile something can be done by way of appreciation.

One may well begin at the beautiful apartment at 4 Rue des Deux Ponts on the Ile St.-Louis. This had been for many years the home of the Du Boses and a rare literary center of Paris. Here, by gracious appointment or happy invitation, came writers, artists, pilgrims, from the cultures of all the world. Entering the living room, they found themselves immediately in a home of beauty, in a dwelling of the mind. They felt themselves uplifted and upheld by truth. Below and in the immediate foreground, they saw the Cathedral of Notre-Dame, its apse and delicate spire tranquil above the busyness of the river and the world. This was something more than landscape. It was the vital center of the Du Bos home. Every day began with the seven-thirty Mass in the Lady Chapel of the Cathedral. Every Mass terminated with the kiss of peace exchanged between the quartette that composed the family, Charlie and Zezette, Primerose and Madge.

Beyond the living room lay that world of books, the library. Here one found Charles Du Bos truly at home. A deference finer than the grace of the French gentleman characterized his welcome to his guests. He seated them close beside him, then met their minds with a dignity worthy of his own. The rows and piles and shelves of books gave outward manifestation of that.

Charles Du Bos had been a student at Oxford in 1900, at Florence in 1904, at Berlin in 1905. Apart from his exhaustive knowledge of French thought, he was a profound student of English, German, and Italian literature, and lectured brilliantly in all these languages as in his own. The word "profound" must be understood to indicate a depth amazing in its exhaustiveness and penetrating in its clarity. It included a preparation simultaneously philosophical and literary. Bergson was the teacher out of his own century of whom M. Du Bos spoke with deep affection as one who had influenced him most. Saint Augustine was his greater and even more beloved master.

Looking about his library, one got a bewildering sense of the scope of his interests and of his studies. He read always the best in current literature and one may say he read the best out of current literature. He read back into the nineteenth and eighteenth centuries with scrupulous

thoroughness and understanding. He gave himself with peculiar philosophical competence to the study of Goethe. His intellectual devotion went to Walter Pater and his love to Keats. He interpreted Pascal with deep spiritual sympathy. His lectures on the Brownings and on Claudel are unforgettable.

Out of this world of books grew the life of M. Du Bos, for he gave more than a good half of his time and strength to intense creative criticism of the writing of the last three centuries. This he dictated for the most part in French. A study on Walter Pater he had planned to make simultaneously in English and French. His long study of Byron has been translated into English. A series of lectures given in English at faculty meetings at Saint Mary's College under the title, "What Is Literature?" and published by Sheed & Ward he dedicated to us. His essays as a whole are published in Paris (usually by R. A. Correa) under the general title, "Approximations." There are seven volumes of these. They include studies of Patmore, Charles Morgan, Baudelaire, Tolstoi, Hardy, Maurice Baring, Thomas Mann, John Middleton Murry, André Maurois. His *Le Dialogue avec André Gide* and *Le Problème du Romancier Catholique* are separate volumes. Here, altogether, one has what may easily come to be accepted as some of the best critical writing of our century. But it is less by this than by his diary, that intimate chronicle of his prayers, his daily communion with God and man entitled *Extraits d'un Journal*, that his place is assured in the memory of men. This is as he had wished. There is also a body of unpublished work that will be of the first importance.

Through his *Journal* one sees pass the unique and reverent procession of his friends. They came to him from all worlds, from all ages, and in every need. His friend, François Mauriac, wrote of him:

> "No one during these last years met him without being helped. With what charity, what respect, he received the confidences of human love! What welcome waited those who brought their griefs to him, and how the wind of grace blew wide his door! He responded to every appeal, nor repulsed a single hand extended to him."

Naturally his world of literary associates was wide and rich. For thirty years Edith Wharton was his devoted friend. A picture of her taken at the age of ten stood on the desk in his daughter's room. One recognized in it the lovely oil painting which hung in Mrs. Wharton's study at Hyères. André Maurois, T. S. Eliot, Thornton Wilder, Desmond Fitzgerald, Frank Sheed, were, from various continents, of his world and mind. On his visits to America, the Abbé Dimnet visited the Du Boses whom he described as "Babes in the Woods." One of them, he said, "is

a genius." Gertrud von Le Fort, the German novelist and poet, was for many years close to his life. An attempt at enumeration is useless. Mrs. Chanler's is a fair cross section of the intellectual group that shared the friendship of Charles Du Bos. In that group none were more intimate than the Maritains, Jacques and Raïssa.

In 1937 the Reverend John O'Hara invited M. Du Bos to come to the University of Notre Dame as a guest professor. He became even more a beloved teacher and friend to all faculty and students at Saint Mary's. Two incidents out of that experience, unacademic though they be, describe the man abundantly. When his train reached South Bend he had already been identified by the Pullman porter who had seen his picture in the morning paper and accorded him all the deference due the very great. His clear, kind blue eyes, his drooping moustache, his student's shoulders, his cane, all came almost immediately to characterize this gentle European scholar in a most American environment. Committed by the porter to the Midwestern scene, he went with his family at once to his temporary home on Peashway that grew dear to him with intense and intimate associations. He lunched at Saint Mary's and then arranged immediately for daily Mass and his weekly confession. Only after these had been provided for beyond mishap did he advert to his academic program and schedule. In 1927 he had had the overwhelming experience of religious conversion. His spiritual director, the Abbé Altermann, had advised the practice of daily Mass and Holy Communion, and he obeyed with tenderness and tears.

During these years, Saint Mary's was more than home to "Charlie" and his family. Every morning we met at Mass at which he assisted, often in tears. Breakfast followed. Then came our conversations in my office—Charlie on one side of the table with his innumerable pipes, I on the other. One pipe after another was lighted, smoked and cooled as we talked of ominous world conditions, the epistle or gospel of the Mass of the day, a current book, a line from Julian of Norwich, the light that is life. You can easily guess that my contributions to these conversations were chiefly monosyllabic. Charlie needed oral expression and a listener before he fixed his clarities of thought into the clarities of prose. His inscriptions in all his books on my special Du Bos shelves tell something of this exchange. Not even the experience, as the lived life of which he loved to speak, submits itself to adequate exposition. I can only say I am a different I because of it.

Frequently M. Du Bos was invited to lecture away from the University. Once a friend ventured to explain that his audience would not be of college level intellectually. "In that case," answered M. Du Bos quickly, "I shall improvise. I can speak below my level. I cannot write below my

level." Nothing so characterizes him as this devout Catholicity, this unfaltering honesty, "the spirit of sweet inflexibility," as Mauriac calls it. To have seen him assist at Mass, to have listened to him lecture, to have heard him intone the "Come, Holy Spirit," as he always did at the beginning of his classes, was to have entered with him deeply into the life of the spirit.

On the tenth of June 1939 he sailed for France on the *Normandie* with his wife and daughter. Madame Du Bos wrote from the boat and Primerose from Paris, reporting continuous illness during the trip. This was part of the chronic condition from which he had suffered for thirty years and which had been so acute in the spring as to prevent further writing or teaching. A letter from Primerose from La Celle St. Cloud dated August tenth reads:

> "Father died last Saturday, the fifth, on the feast of Saint Mary of the Snow. He had the death he deserved, the death of a saint. He was quite conscious and asked himself for the sacraments. He had time to speak to each of us in particular, to tell us about his unfinished work. It was so great, so beautiful, that it gives courage to Mother and to me!"

It is impossible to measure the inheritance into which we have entered through the death of Charles Du Bos. The life that was light which he gave so lucidly under the veil of mortality now shines upon us through his participation in the beatific vision.

I come now from my digression, ending with the death of Charles Du Bos on August 5, 1939, to ourselves, Sister Verda Clare and me in Paris, 1933. On October 3, Madge called at our Paris convent to say goodbye. The feast of Saint Francis, October 4, brought me back to England. Lots of mail, a hot bath, a down quilt welcomed me at Cherwell Edge where the Sisters of the Holy Child mothered me for the year.

Matriculation at Oxford was a simple matter after the long waiting lines, the inquisitive registration cards, the involved choices attending one's induction to American University life. I registered for Father D'Arcy's lectures in philosophy at Baliol, Mr. Tolkein in fields of Old English. The friendships of these great scholars are now a part of life at Saint Mary's: Father D'Arcy as a most welcome guest, Mr. Tolkein in his absorbing romances.

More than anything or everything at Oxford, I awaited the wonder of the Bodleian library. Immediately after completing the paperwork and finances of entrance requirements I set out to that paradise of books. Following instructions, I entered an impressive archway which admitted me to a fair-sized court. A small door on the west wall of the court bore

the unimpressive legend, BODLEIAN LIBRARY. I walked over. This must be a back entrance, a janitor's door. I did not even turn the knob. One must enter the Bodleian by marble steps, bronze doors, age-old architectural gateways. I walked out of the court and over to the Camera. Here in its eighteenth century supplementary reading room for the Bodleian are housed books more generally needed by undergraduate students. But where was the Bodleian? I was certain that I should know or find it by intuition. I went back to the simple little door and its unobtrusive weathered sign. Still I did not go in. The entrance was entirely too unimpressive. Back at the convent, I asked again for directions. They brought me back the next day to the same door. This time I opened it on to a dusty wood stairway, dusty wood railing with, on the dusty landing, Mother Margaret Williams, our dear little American Religious of the Sacred Heart, and daughter of Michael Williams. She greeted me with the enchantment of her hours among the English word-hoards still upon her. "Isn't the Bodleian wonderful?" she asked. I agreed completely!

My *Oxford University Handbook* had told me: "Each reader will find his own experience the best guide." Again, I agreed. Mine had begun. Cherwell Edge, my Oxford home, bordered the river and walk to Mesopotamia. These were mine early mornings, Addison's walk later in the day, and Chaucer's daisy fields for longer jaunts. During the month flurries of American guests called for tea, not fewer than seven on November 8. That evening I met the Margaret Roper Club at 11 Norham Gardens, the Convent of the Religious of the Sacred Heart.

The next morning I was awakened with a wire from Paris. The second casualty determining the two major benedictions of our year had occurred. Sister Verda Clare had had an emergency appendectomy. I was in Paris that evening. Doctors insisted on the Riviera for recuperation. We found the little town of Hyères, twenty miles from Toulon, perfect for our needs, inexpensive enough for our finances, with a convent on the Avenue des Iles d'Or happy to receive us. Here Saint Louis landed on his return from the ninth crusade. Here Queen Victoria spent her winters year after year, and in La Solitude, his home on the mountainside, Robert Louis Stevenson found the only happiness he knew in Europe.

We spent two heavenly months in Hyères. Edith Wharton lived almost beside us. Her magnificent library she made freely available. We sat out on her terrace at tea with the low Alps for our backdrop and the blue Mediterranean at our feet. We had the immortal experience of Christmas in Provence with its crèches, *santons*, midnight Mass, and the serenade music of the troubadours.

On January 26 we said reluctant goodbyes to our little family at the convent and our friends in the village. As a last-moment disclosure, some

of the little old ladies at the pension revealed to us what to them was a great secret. They told us that they recognized the moment we entered the dining room that we were "chic." We asked them by what sign they knew this. They told us, half-fearful of shocking us, that we wore "high-heel shoes." This would be a mark of real style in a French nun.

Our itinerary to Rome provided stops at Cannes and Genoa. Arrived in Rome, we were met by three of our friends from Hyères who had gone on ahead of us. One of them is now a religious caring for the lepers in Madagascar.

XVI

Good Morning, Bishop

ONE single date we had set on the movable calendar of our year in Europe. We would begin the Holy Year novena in Rome at the Church of Saint Mary Major on February 2. In pouring rain, we crossed the city to Mass and Holy Communion. As we genuflected at the altar in Praesipio the celebrant turned and said, *Pax vobiscum.* I turned to my companions, saying, "I don't know what you want to do. I am staying here. This is Bishop Edwin O'Hara." We remained through his Mass. I followed him at a discreet distance to the door of the sacristy. As he came out, I said simply, "Good morning, Bishop."

The sequel is this: Archbishop Edward Howard, Bishop O'Hara, Father John Forest, O.F.M., Miriam Marks, Executive Secretary of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine with her young niece, Miriam Marshall, were on pilgrimage to the Holy Land in the cause of the Confraternity New Testament then in preparation. As a gift and a compliment to the Sisters of the Holy Cross, we became honored and honorary pilgrims. We felt like co-tourists of Habacuc or Philip being carried off so marvelously to the good works of God.

Our week in Rome included an audience with our Holy Father, Pope Pius XI, in a party of perhaps twenty-five, visits to the churches of the pilgrimage, the greater galleries, Mass in the catacombs, a canonization at St. Peter's.

On February 9, we said goodbye to our dear friends from Hyères and were off to Naples. Here Mount Vesuvius floated its flag of smoke over an untidy city and an azure bay. Between blue skies and blue waters, we moved the next morning to the blue grottoes of Capri. Before ten the next morning we boarded the *Ausonia* for Alexandria. The Duke of Aosta was a passenger.

Landing at Alexandria amounted to major chaos. Tenders brought Arab porters aboard like ants. Wild confusion followed, mad scrambling for bags, disembarking amid frantic shouting, losing and finding luggage, tempestuous tips. Nothing we had ever known in American life could approximate it. Finally, and almost to our surprise, we found one another and all our worldly goods on the train for Cairo where we arrived for dinner.

February 14 was both the feast of Saint Valentine and Ash Wednesday. We received ashes at the Church of Saint Francis. Later, we visited the museum of King Tutankhamen, crossed the Nile on a hand-propelled barge to Pharaoh's Garden and the alleged bulrushes of Moses and on to the pyramids.

In the name of all incongruities we walked into a sightseeing party with the bill-boarded Josephine Baker, escorted by the city fathers of Cairo. We were mounted on camels and experienced the gentlest, most comfortable form of locomotion I had ever known. Each camel had a name. Mine was Kinstota, an Arabic word for "that I may drink." Symbolically, nothing could have more perfectly expressed my state of soul and expectant mind.

Traveling on ecclesiastical business, under the aegis of Saint Anthony and Father John, meant cars and Franciscan hospitality everywhere. Leaving Cairo for Jerusalem at 5:15 P.M. we were blocked by a sandstorm and a broken engine until after two in the morning. Good nature, good conversation, black Turkish coffee, well fortified, kept us half awake and less than half frozen. Lady Morgan, a beautiful English gentlewoman, had joined us. She and Archbishop Howard furnished the comic relief. We needed it. We crossed the Suez Canal at three in the morning, under the cold stars in a cold sky. The ferryboat across the canal was a barge primitive beyond belief. It did, however, span the narrow ribbon of water and land us into the turbulence of another customhouse. Fortunately, we had good compartments on a good train to Jerusalem.

Here spring comes in February. Wild tulips, anemone, cyclamen were in blossom. Children sold bunches at the station. We bought some, divided them among us, and entered the Holy City carrying flowers.

In Jerusalem we found Franciscan hospitality never more welcome. Day after day we assisted at Mass at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, on Mount Calvary, at Gethsemane, at the Altar of the Annunciation in Nazareth. The Dead Sea proved more leaden than Great Salt Lake. Jericho confirmed every detail of its fall chronicled in the Book of Joshua. Our boat ride from Tiberias to Capernaum and back violated all laws of navigation and human survival. Yet, we did survive.

Returning to Nazareth we drove west to Mount Carmel and its great

monastery where seventeen languages are spoken and nineteen studied. Here we assisted at Mass in the cave of the Prophet Elias on Washington's Birthday. By train to Cairo, to Alexandria, and by boat back to Naples. The Mediterranean discouraged most of the passengers aboard our boat from dinner, and even breakfast. I thought of Aeneas and even of Saint Paul in perhaps not entirely different weathers. Sicily took on real local color as three itinerant violinists played "Santa Lucia" on our departure. To return to a city, even comparatively strange, gives one a sense of possession. My every entering through the gates of Rome made the city that much more my very own.

Term time in Oxford made stops in Assisi, Siena, Florence possible. Johannes Jörgensen had tea every afternoon at the Convent of the Franciscan Sisters of the Atonement where I stayed in Assisi. He bowed with old-world gallantry as we said goodbye. Saint Francis and Saint Clare became contemporary in his presence.

In Florence and in Siena, I left my heart, I think. If I never return to them I shall still never have left them wholly. Helen Robins, the sister-in-law of Joseph Pennell, was my friend and hostess in Siena. Her dining room, with its wainscoted frieze of Pennell etchings, made even her delicious food almost unessential. Her love of Saint Catherine and our pilgrimages to her home, her churches, made sanctity almost essential.

Milan meant chiefly the refectory housing the Last Supper of Leonardo da Vinci and Mass in the Chapel of Saint Charles Borromeo in the great sculptured-lace cathedral.

In Freiburg, the dear Dominican Sisters from Rosary College welcomed me to their home at Les Fougères. Two days were too brief but my Oxford leave of absence had become already overlong. I returned to Paris on Saint Patrick's day, leaving finally on Monday of Holy Week for Le Mans, Chartres and Solesmes. At Chartres, in care of Etienne Houvet, the dear father and custodian of the cathedral, I learned to read the texts of the great windows and to venerate with him the wonder of their beauty. Chartres is more than a name, more than a cathedral. It is a world, a life. If you have been there you know.

The rest of Holy Week I spent visiting with our Marianite Sisters in Le Mans, visiting the homes and the graves of our holy founders. On Holy Saturday I went to Solesmes, the great Benedictine capital of Gregorian Chant. The past months had given me canonization ceremonies, a papal audience, the Holy Land, and now Solesmes. If I had been there for the entire week I think I must have died of the sheer magnitude of the beauty that unfolded for me.

After Vespers and Compline, at the great gray monastic church on Holy Saturday, I walked down the dirt road under the quiet star-strewn

sky to the little Villa Saint François, to think and to dream until Easter dawn. At four in the morning I walked back to the Church, in the light of the pale paschal moon for Matins and Lauds and early Masses. After breakfast, I returned for Prime, Tierce, Solemn Pontifical Mass, Sext and None, assisting with an expectant intensity and an attentive inner listening to every chanted text, every sung note. This was the perfect setting for the sacrifice of the Mass, almost too tremendous, too beautiful to bear.

Returning to the Villa, I was conscious of a lovely fragrance which led me to a wooded lane, carpeted with blue violets. Here I sat, for hours I think, under a perfect sky, gathering them and trying to grow up to the wonder of worship that I had lived the past twenty-four hours. I returned to Paris that evening, my small suitcase in one hand, violets in the other, and who can say what memories in my heart? The next day I left for England by way of Mont-Saint-Michel, Saint-Malo. The Sisters of Cavendish Square, London, and at Cherwell Edge, Oxford, amazed at my Marco Polo adventures, asked, "Did nothing unpleasant happen?" I said, "Nothing," and started back to school.

XVII

The Long Way Round

Oxford that Trinity term meant and continues to mean for me Mr. C. S. Lewis. After attending his second lecture on the Prolegomena to the Study of Medieval Poetry I said to some of the students at Cherwell Edge, "Mr. Lewis is the one person at Oxford with whom I should like to tutor." "But," they exclaimed in amazement at my temerity, "Mr. Lewis refuses to tutor a woman." "That," I replied stoutly, "does not change my statement in the least."

You probably are not interested in a prolegomenon or preface to medieval poetry, or indeed in this archaic poetry itself. I should like, however, to share with you two experiences from the class in which Mr. Lewis dug up medieval poetry by the roots and planted it in our minds, there to grow and flower as it might. At the beginning of the course he announced by titles nineteen lectures. Later in the term he missed three of these because of illness. Returning to class, he stated that obviously some of the assigned lectures would have to be omitted. He asked that if we had any preference for those to be retained we would write him a note saying so. At Oxford, one does not stop a don before or after lectures for conference, or even for conversation. One writes him a note.

The intercollege mail delivery among the colleges is the biggest and best form of communication and the accepted one at the University.

I had been anticipating impatiently the single lecture on Boethius. I wrote as much to Mr. Lewis. He gave in response three lectures on the author of *The Consolation of Philosophy*. This was the graciousness of the teacher.

Later, I wrote to thank him and to ask if there was available a bibliography on his course. He replied by writing out for me a history of the development of his study, a list of the books I should read relating to it, a list I might read, and a list to which I need pay no attention at all. This was the gentleman. Mr. Lewis had tutored me.

During term time I sat for an afternoon at the feet of Dean Inge as he lectured on "Liberty, Natural and Supernatural," asking such questions as "Why should the state be selected for apotheosis? It is the least inspiring of many national or international organizations to which we can belong." As he left the platform and the hall, unaccompanied, my inclination as an impulsive American was to go up and thank him for his talk. One does not do that at Oxford to a don, much less to a dean.

Another afternoon, Walter de la Mare talked on "Meanings of Words in Poetry." John Masefield sat directly in front of me in the hall. As the two walked out together after the lecture, my American impulse to hurry up to both in my enthusiasm for poets and poetry tugged at the bridle of English propriety. But I did walk close behind them all the way along the High to Magdalen Bridge.

Mrs. Michael Williams had been spending a part of the spring at Oxford where her daughter, Mother Williams, R.S.C., was studying. On June 3 we shared an intimation of Newman's Second Spring too long deferred. On that evening, the Sunday within the octave of Corpus Christi, an ancient glory returned to Oxford, England. The Blessed Sacrament was carried in procession in its streets for the first time in, perhaps, four hundred years. On the afternoon before, the ceremony of conferring university degrees had taken place in the old Sheldonian Theatre. There, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, candidates were admitted to their academic honors according to the dignified Latin formula of the fifteenth century, from which all significance except that of antiquity seems to have fallen away. By contrast, the procession of the Blessed Sacrament, divinely vital for all its centuries of disuse, made its march of sacramental might from the Church of St. Aloysius to Blackfriars in a pageant that gathered a heroic past and future into its splendid present.

The great religious orders of men were there: Benedictines, Franciscans, Dominicans, Servites, Jesuits, Salesians; the religious orders of

women: Sisters of the Holy Child, Mercy, Nazareth House, Holy Cross; the Oxford undergraduates in academic costume; the Sodalists; the children of the Catholic schools; the bodyguard of the Knights of St. Columba; the four Oxford professors in doctoral robes of crimson and scarlet and black, bearing the baldachin; the great congregation of the faithful. Like both pelican and phoenix the beautiful living body rose, one might think, from the blood and ashes of the past.

Perennial youth marked its progress from altar to altar. Down Woodstock Road, peopled with a thousand memories, it walked with God that late afternoon, past St. Giles's Church, that seven hundred years ago raised the lancet-lighted tower from which bells sweeten the air of Oxford still; past St. Benet's Hall, the Benedictine place of peace and study; past Pusey House, the heart of a high and earnest Anglo-Catholicism; past the Jesuit house of studies, Campion Hall; by all that's in a name, the Blackfriars, where this second time the sons of Saint Dominic have returned to the seat of wisdom for which they had laid the stone of the corner. There opposite the severely beautiful front of St. John's College, the long procession stopped for Benediction in the fine chapel of Blackfriars. Then the singing progress took its way back to the Church of St. Aloysius where, with a second Benediction, this most significant pilgrimage to honor the Blessed Sacrament ended. Among those officiating were the flower of the priesthood in England today, Fathers Carpenter and D'Arcy, Monsignor Ronald Knox. And who shall forbid the spirit of Newman that paradisal walk in the evening air of his Oxford!

Among academic events of the year, encaenia takes precedence. According to the order of proceedings,

> "The doors of the Theatre will open at a QUARTER PAST ELEVEN O'CLOCK. . . .
>
> "The Burgesses, Proctors, Heads of Houses, and Doctors of Divinity, Civil Law, Medicine, Music, Letters, and Science, invited to partake of Lord Crewe's Benefaction to the University, meet the Chancellor in the Hall of Worcester College, at twenty minutes past Eleven o'clock; whence they go in procession to the Theatre.
>
> "THE PROCESSION enters the Theatre at TWELVE O'CLOCK precisely."

The date was June 20. The procession, reaching from the westernmost college of Oxford to its very heart, the Sheldonian Theatre, moved in the pageantry of letters, arts, sciences as old as the University itself and reflecting in color and design the enthronement of the intellectual life in its proper city, its acknowledged capital. Along George Street they came, along the Broad, to the Theatre's gates: Bachelors in cap and fur-bordered hood and gown; Masters, black-gowned, with crimson hoods;

Doctors, resplendent in crimson-hooded black gown with sleeves of crimson silk or French gray. Silk braided broadcloth with full-crowned hats marched beside taffeta rose and cream brocades. Black velvet beside blue, gray with white until at twelve o'clock precisely the procession entered the Theatre. Here indeed the philosophy of clothes found complete fulfillment, once quaintly described by Carlyle's German professor: "From the soberest drab to the high flaming scarlet, spiritual idiosyncrasies unfolded themselves in the choice of color; if the cut betoken intellect and talent, so does the color betoken temper and heart."

The Chancellor opened the convocation immediately, announcing and conferring "HONORARY DEGREES . . . on certain distinguished persons." André Maurois was among these. Then followed the CREWEIAN ORATION, the prizes for English, Greek, Latin verse and prose, after which, as announced by the great staid program, "THE CHANCELLOR dissolved the CONVOCATION."

My valedictory had not been announced, but this was it. On July 1, I left Oxford, detached it is true, but never, never pulled up by the roots.

XVIII

47 Palace Court

ONCE during term time I went through the Cotswolds with an American friend, returning by way of Stratford for a matinee performance of *Henry V*. British English may not trouble other Americans. It did confuse me. But at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre I heard the English that I knew, spoken as I had sometimes heard it in the United States and as I myself try to speak it. I submit this as a fact, not as a compliment. Our American speech habits are far from meriting that.

On a weekend in April I went down to London for an appointment at 47 Palace Court. Monica Lucas, an elder daughter of Wilfrid Meynell, greeted me at the door. As I entered the magical library her father said, by way of introduction and welcome, "Sister, I have made one mistake in my life." "What is that?" I asked in surprise. "I have had my eighty-first birthday." After that we were not only acquainted, we were friends.

Seated with him before an open fire, I listened to wonder stories of Francis Thompson, his beloved Alice, Dicky Doyle who designed the cover still used on *Punch*, Coventry Patmore, George Meredith, the Brownings. "Just there on the rug before the fire, Francis Thompson used to lie and play with the children or dream in the firelight. Alice sat at the table here, wrote 'The Shepherdess,' and gave it to me to read be-

fore the ink was dry on it. As I read it I said, 'This, I think, may be the poem by which you will be best remembered.' "

I agreed with him. Then he went on, "I was in a bookstore the other day making some purchases. As I gave the attendant my name she asked, 'Not by any chance a relative of Alice Meynell?' 'Her husband,' I said proudly. Then she quoted:

'She walks—the lady of my delight—
A shepherdess of sheep.'

'Ten thousand shop girls in London, Mr. Meynell, bless your wife for writing those lines.' "

The afternoon was one of pure enchantment. Manners rather than desire forced me to say at last that I must go. The taxi came. Mr. Meynell took me to the door, to the cab, and waved farewell. I drove off, feeling like a little girl of five saying goodbye to a fairy godfather. There must be at least one such person in the world. I had spent the afternoon with him.

A number of times Hilary Pepler had come to visit me at Cavendish Square, London, and in Oxford. We were both absorbed in the liturgy, mimes, the restoration of the medieval arts and crafts. With Father Vincent McNabb, O.P., and Eric Gill he had laid the foundations for a religious art center at Ditchling. Conrad, his son and a Dominican scholastic at Blackfriars, Oxford, occasionally visited with me at Cherwell Edge. It is pleasant to remember Father Conrad Pepler, O.P., the editor of *Black Friars* and *The Sword of the Spirit* in these untroubled student days.

His father and sister Susan came up in June to fetch me for a weekend with the Meynells at Greatham, Sussex, their country home. Such a Utopia! How shall I tell of it: A great seventeenth century stone and beam house, set well back from a brick and rock wall, with poplar trees named for the twelve apostles between; rooms with whitewashed walls and natural wood beams and timbered gable, patchwork quilted beds, antique chairs and chests. All said "seventeenth century" to me. But they said even more certainly, "This is Alice Meynell's home."

Alice had been with God for a decade or more, but from Greatham she was never absent. The great living room library had been built for her in 1907, walled with books by and for her as the years brought them. Bookshelves under the windows were piled with files of magazines. Wilfrid opened one to a contemporary criticism of a poem by Browning. Against it in the margin, Robert had written in bold, indignant script, "This is a lie!"

It would be easier to say what one could not than what one could

find on the shelves, the tables, the desks, in the copious graciousness of this room: first editions, limited, rare editions, inscribed, autographed volumes, books out of print, piles of letters from poets, critics, writers from everywhere and on everything. Walking about from shelf to shelf with me, taking down special treasures here and there, Wilfrid said, "Take anything you want in this room, Sister." It was like saying, in the vernacular, "All this and heaven, too!"

Viola Meynell Dallyn was our hostess. Her sister Monica lived in one of the smaller houses provided for the family. Shane Leslie, not yet knighted, shared with us the incomparable Meynell hospitality. After dinner, we sat around the great open fire, reading aloud, chiefly from Francis Thompson, and talking of the world of writers for whom the editor of *Merrie England* and Alice had been angels. After such an evening, what more could one dream of the night long?

We went to Mass at Storrington in the morning and back to breakfast, where our fruit was gooseberry fool. Though I knew it only as a name I recognized it at sight, much to my own satisfaction since Mr. Meynell challenged me on it. At table, I sat directly in front of a wide, low fireplace. After breakfast we looked up the lefthand side of this chimney. Here, about five feet up, was a substantial shelf, a priests' hiding hole from Reformation days. We were brought close to the frightening realities of persecution as we ourselves stood where who can say how many a hunted priest had stood and stepped to safety beside and above the flames and smoke of a blazing fireplace!

By contrast, we found at the out-of-door swimming pool a fine statue of Christ from a seventeenth century Spanish group portraying His baptism. Mr. Meynell remarked more than once that the face of Christ looked much like George Meredith when he was talking with Alice. It pleased me to add this to my memories of that Platonic friendship, his Dear Portia letters to her and his violets buried with her.

Parting from Greatham was in unwonted ways "such sweet sorrow." After repeated goodbyes, we left for tea at the home of Hilaire Belloc on our way to Ditchling. He had gone across country that afternoon, but the brilliant conversation of his daughter Elizabeth provided gracious hospitality. Saint Dominic's Press, the oldest hand press in England; the chapel furnished with handwoven vestments; studios for arts and crafts in metals, ivory, wood; fields for agriculture, "the long line of the downs," English skylarks—all these we met at Ditchling, a weekend to exceed all weekends and my last before leaving Oxford.

XIX

The Best Way Home

MY LUGGAGE for the year, my typewriter, my book box and I rang the doorbell at Cavendish Square for my last sojourn there on July 1. What a convent for a home, and what a home for memories! A block north of Oxford Street and Oxford Circus, the American Embassy on the opposite corner to my left, Wimpole Street and the home of the Barretts to the right, down Marylebone, straight ahead two blocks to the cloistered Dominican convent, built on the site of Tyburn, sanctified by the seventeenth century maniac hangings of priests and layfolk. All this was our environment, with Hyde Park and the Marble Arch a pleasant evening's walk beyond. These were our afterdinner recreations during my last week in London.

On July 8, Julie Kernan and I took part in a small pilgrimage from Chelsea down the Thames to the Tower to honor the fourth centenary of the execution of Saint Thomas More. Past the grim Traitors' Gate we went to the boat landing, then through the gray corridors of the Tower to the room where the King's Good Servant looked out of a slot of a prison window to the boundless freedoms of eternity and wrote with a charred coal that last poignant letter to his good daughter Margaret with its tender comment, "I have never liked your manner toward me better than when you kissed me last." And still on to the gray stone house where royal prisoners, looking out on to the court and the site of the scaffold could watch the executions of companions in royal disfavor while waiting for their own. Their names, and sometimes brief commentaries scratched on the walls told a cryptic story of their rendezvous with death. Our last tribute to Saint Thomas More we paid with Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament at the Church of the English Martyrs.

This chronicle I find is becoming more and more a business of what to leave out. But this you must know. At the very last weekend in London I went down to meet Frank Sheed and Frederick Page on Pater Noster Row, Ave Maria Lane, Amen Corner. Where in all the world could I have matched this journey's end? Nowhere else then, and nowhere now. Bombs have torn all this out of the heart of London.

By the happiest circumstances I spent my last Sunday with May Lamberton Becker and her daughter, Beatrice Warde, a distinguished calligrapher and typographer. We had met at the British Museum the day before, quite by chance. Our friendships, enthusiasms, and Ameri-

canism carried over through the Sunday afternoon at the Tate Gallery, with William Blake chiefly, then to dinner and reluctant farewells.

One may visit the English Cathedral towns in many ways. For me, my way will always be the best. On the seventeenth of July, Hilary Pepler, Susan and I drove to Cambridge where the Tudor Chapel clothed us in splendor and gracious English nuns gave us hospitality; then through the charm of the English countryside, its ubiquitous windmills under Wedgwood sky to Ely, on impatiently to Norwich, where even more than the Cathedral, the fieldstone Church and shrine of Dame Julian awaited us. Susan's friend, Ruth, joined us here as we drove North through poppy fields to the Church, shrine and convent of Our Lady of Walsingham, now reverently kept by Anglican nuns. After one more stop at Boston we reached Lincoln for the night. We came into the Cathedral just at Evensong with its boy choir singing, "Jesus joy of man's desiring." The text always true in its Bach setting and its 'litel clergeons' there and then could hardly have been lovelier.

York was one of our objectives. We had come in part on pilgrimage to Blessed Margaret Clitherow whose shrine is at the Bar Convent. If this were a book on English Cathedral towns, I should never finish even one of them, York least of all. Happily, we spent the feast of Saint Mary Magdalen, my patron, there, between the Cathedral with the ruby-jeweled gray Five Sisters windows and the great Roman city walls. Here Mr. Pepler left us and his son Mark took on the driving and the second part of our journey.

Presently we were on our way to Whitby, the fishing village, the grave of Caedmon, the double monastery of Saint Hilda, still majestic in its unprotesting ruins. A hundred feet below, the restive North Sea across which she looked toward her dreamed-of Norman world still matched its futile strength against the black stone promontory.

In the past four months I had knelt at the shrines of my predilect friends: Saint Francis of Assisi, Dame Julian of Norwich, and now Saint Hilda. And on a day in Hyères we had driven over to *La Sainte Baume*, the immense grotto in which legend says that Saint Mary Magdalen lived in solitude and prayer until her death. We had of course gone to Bethany and Magdala in Palestine. A thousand dollars had brought me many riches beyond Oxford.

From Whitby Mark drove us west to Haworth where we arrived in late afternoon. We stopped at a shop for tea, bought a loaf of whole-wheat bread, a pound of butter, as much of cheese, a bag of sweet biscuits, and a butcher knife. Again we stopped to engage lodgings for the night, then drove up into the moors, parked the car and found ourselves heather seats among the rocks. In good American style, I cut,

buttered, and cheesed the bread into sandwiches. We ate and talked on many of the burning subjects of the day, among them the barrier which the religious habit imposes on social relations with the secular world. My young English trio were strong for defrocking us all. I looked at my watch. I looked at the twilight western sky. In this latitude darkness scarcely comes until midnight. It was ten o'clock. Remembering our early morning start next day, I took over brushing the crumbs away and getting back to our car and our lodgings for bed and breakfast. In the process, we all had a good laugh at our conversation so gaily uninhibited by one religious habit of a Sister of the Holy Cross.

After breakfast, we visited the parsonage home of the Brontës, the cemetery, and the somber environment in which *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* had had their inceptions.

Chester we reached that afternoon, visited its red sandstone Cathedral, walked on the city walls and on the rows, the double lines of main streets with covered second stories. We remembered that this ancient military *castrum* is the one city in England which never gave up its Catholic faith.

It would seem that in all this Cathedral pilgrimage we neither slept nor ate. There were hospitable convents, cheery inns. We stayed at both. We lunched and dined at such beguiling dining rooms as the Crown, the Queen, Magpie Inn, Rope and Anchor, and with the good Ursuline Sisters at the Dee House, Chester.

Time had come for another valedictory. Mark, Susan and Ruth returned to London, leaving me to a pleasant train ride to Holyhead, a choppy hour across the Irish Sea and the *summum bonum*, Dublin at its end.

XX

From Dublin to Donegal

AT OXFORD I had asked, simply, if I might possibly meet Father Ronald Knox. I had been charged to do this by my good mutual American friends. But the conservative English sisters discouraged me; Father Knox was not easily accessible, they implied, and I remained discouraged. Imagine my amusement when one day on the Riviera I received a letter addressed in red ink to:

Sister Mary Madeleva of the Rocky Mountains
In care of Father Ronald Knox
Oxford, England

and readdressed by the reputedly inaccessible Father to me at my convent home in Hyères. The mountain, it seemed, had come to Mohammed.

The letter was from my devoted friend, Seumas MacManus, the poet and shanachie, importuning me not to return to America without accepting his hospitality in Ireland. But who would!

Sunday in Dublin I spent with the Yeatses at Rothfarnham, with "Willie," his kindly wife, his robust daughter. Tea and cakes, a walk in the garden prefaced our real visit in his library where the great-hearted, white-haired Irish poet, without his greater birthright of faith, talked with me. He read to me from his own poems and from those of that kindred Gaelic muse, Ella Young.

No one but Seumas MacManus could have revealed to me the Ireland that I saw under his enchanting courtesies. First, he arranged for me to go to Lough Dergh, Saint Patrick's Purgatory, without complying with a single rule for setting foot on this place of austere pilgrimage. Hundreds go barefooted and fasting to the Island for three days of vigil, black fast and prayer. A great boat with two stout oarsmen waited for me at the landing on my arrival. They rowed against a bitter wind which did everything to my cap and veil short of blowing them off my head. Once on the Island I was welcomed by the Canon. Later, I joined the praying pilgrims, stopping at the beds of Saint Patrick and Saint Brigid and the great Basilica, the central places of devotion. Mr. MacManus and his friends were waiting to drive me a short fifteen miles to Mount Charles, his home in Donegal. Here, with his cousin Mrs. Tierney as my hostess and her home my home, I spent ten days in sheer Gaelic enchantment.

The town itself is a bit of a village, of one street, climbing up the hillside where on this charmed week the tinkers were camping. At the top of the hill, looking into four counties, and the trysting place of more of the "good people" than are in all the island, Mr. MacManus had a pretty, pleasant home. Here, I think, his daughters and his good friend, Percy MacKaye, may have stayed during their summers in Ireland. Seumas himself lived in a fine substantial house opposite the Tierneys.

Every day brought its unique adventure. We began with Mass and a visit to the grave of Ethna Carberry, the gifted poet-wife of Seumas, who died with and at the birth of their child. Later we drove up to the fishermen's cottages on the rugged Atlantic coast, the country about which Peader O'Donnell wrote, "The Way It Was with Them." Here, in the whitewashed, brown-timbered cottages with their heavy thatched roofs, I saw just that. Through the wide, low chimneys we could look up at the clear blue sky and the soft blue peat smoke rising to meet it from the turf fire. The kitchen dresser with its literal sideboard of brown-

figured or bright-colored cups, saucers, plates, the outshot bed by the fireplace, the wag-by-the-wall long pendulumed clock, the Saint Brigid's crosses tucked up among the rafters, the half-lofts—all became part of my home economics in Donegal. I was glad to have my first lessons in the cottages of fishermen. Thousands of sardine-sized fish shone silver in baskets on the rocks outside their doors. We came past rivers, atumble with waterfalls, to Lough Eske, lying north and south among mountains with coves, wooded shores, "the white-beached lake of the mouth of pearls." A man in a hayfield came up to the fence and told us a story in Gaelic. Seumas matched it with the story of "The woman of three white cows" and its burthen, "As you are strong, be merciful." Here I was, among the singers and bards, children of the epic poets of the past, in a company and an art rare and all but lost in our Western world.

All the way back to the village, Seumas half-chanted tales from Fioin who had the thumb of wisdom which he got from the salmon of wisdom, then the three burthens of the Wife of *the* O'Donnell. The village children, hearing the chug of his precarious car, ran out to meet and hail him. They greeted us half-shyly. Upon our eager request, they buoyantly found themselves in reels and slip jigs, hands and arms motionless, free knees, ankles and toes, heads splendidly erect. All this they matched with Gaelic songs and their moving minor refrains like a cry. Every day began with Mass. Every day was rich with the lived life of an enchanting and partly enchanted people. The morning at the home of James McCahill may stand as one for all. Mr. McCahill was ninety-two. He sat erect in his rocking chair by the fireplace, one arthritic leg crossed over his good knee, a white knitted shawl around his shoulders. Standing, he could have been well over six feet. His profile could have been carved on a cameo or a Roman coin. He wore no glasses on his keen, dark eyes, an unmistakable mark of Spanish heritage. I need hardly say that the beads of his fifteen-decade rosary were slipping through his long, slender fingers.

He greeted me, proud to hold the hand of a sister, and hoped that it would cure his bad foot. He sang for me "The Song of the Green Broom" and another celebrating the prowess of "Bony," Napoleon Bonaparte, whose virtue consisted in a dislike of Cromwell. To the innumerable stanzas of this song he improvised an additional one in honor of the sister from America. He asked me to pray God to give him a happy death, named the four men he had already appointed "to carry his bones out of the house." Two others he had chosen to forbid men he had listed from coming to his wake. These were the misguided countrymen who had failed to support de Valera. Never have I met a gayer spirit. What a great half hour it had been! We said goodbye

chuckling at the implications of his daughter's parting comment, "Too much religion can put you wrong."

The Tighes were friends of the MacManuses as who were not? We stopped a moment to see them. The household was all aflurry! A trunk from America had come the day before. The girls had been better than busy far into the night and all morning, trying on dresses and shoes.

The First Friday of August was my last day in Donegal. After Mass we drove to Bundoran, Seumas chanting songs and folklore all the way. Mrs. Tierney bade me goodbye as a mother might have done. Mr. MacManus, the absolutely perfect host, bought my ticket, the only first-class railway passage I had had in Europe.

Presently I was in Galway! I was leaving Ireland. No, I had not seen the Lakes of Killarney; no, I had not kissed the Blarney stone; no, I had not ridden in a jaunting car. But I had seen Ireland from Dublin to Donegal, from William Butler Yeats to Seumas MacManus. I had ridden through miles of fuchsia hedge, had stood among blossoming foxglove as tall as myself, had been on the moors in the long twilight of the unending summer evenings with the "good people" all about me. I had known and lived with and shared deeply the world, the culture, the spontaneous hospitality, the indigenous charm of a people that I love.

XXI

Taking the Blame for Things

I LEFT Europe reluctantly, sailing from Galway, the very last port of call for boats to America. My final forty-eight hours were part Saturday, part a rainy, turbulent Sunday, and, for comic relief, the last days of the races. All day long hundreds of white swans flew, crying from the river to the bay, from the bay to the river. I had never known that there were so many swans in the world. Winter that year brought us a strange, restless snowstorm with winds blowing and crying across the campus. For me the swans of Galway had returned. I wrote this much in a brief lyric, "Snowstorm." The World's Fair in New York City gave it first place among poems from Indiana. By birth, a loyal Wisconsin Badger, by transplanting a Utah Beehiver, I was now qualified as an Indiana Hoosier poet.

Our boat stopped at Boston. I disembarked, took the New York Central west and was in South Bend before my good ship *Scythia* had come to port in New York City. This was August 13. On the fifteenth I received

my obedience—the religious idiom for assignment or job—as president of Saint Mary's College. The one position which our Superior General, Mother Vincentia, had repeatedly assured me would not be assigned to me she had appointed me to fill.

Once, in crossing by boat from Buffalo to Detroit, I overheard this conversation just outside my cabin:

Wife: Who runs this boat?
Husband: The captain.
Wife: What does he do?
Husband: Nothing.
Wife: Oh! but he must do something.
Husband: No, he doesn't. He doesn't do a thing.
Wife: Who does the work?
Husband: The crew. You'll see. The crew does the work. He sits in his office. He doesn't do anything.
Wife: (still unconvinced) Well, I suppose there has to be someone to take the blame for things.

In parable, this is my story for the past twenty-five years—taking the blame for things. I came to Saint Mary's College at the all-low ebb of the depression, 1934. We had an enrollment of just under three hundred, a magnificent new Tudor Gothic residence hall, dining room and classroom building, a debt of a million dollars. I had left Salt Lake City with a debt approximating that, so the business of paying interest was fairly familiar, however irksome. Here, I found myself responsible for a school ninety years old, a great heritage, a developing plant, a magnificent campus, potentials in faculty and students to dream of and to work with. The best qualifications I brought to my office were these: my ability to dream, my capacities to work.

During my first two years in administration, not knowing what better to do, I taught two courses: one in writing, one in literary criticism. I knew every student by name. I looked around a bit. I thought. The Catholic University invited me to teach two graduate summer courses. I accepted and am still grateful for the friendships they occasioned. Dom Verner Moore was a great spiritual oasis. With Sister Olivia, O.S.B., Sister Amadeo and I began plans for our present department of nursing education.

Gradually, I began to see light. First things must come first. The chapel of the Holy Spirit in Le Mans Hall had been reserved almost entirely for the students. The sisters went to the Church of Our Lady of Loretto for all their religious exercises. Remembering that our Lady

is the mediatrix of all grace, we asked and were granted permission to chant her office three times a day in the chapel of the Holy Spirit. For years, members of our own lay faculty and students joined us. Their own spiritual exercises have now replaced ours for them.

Under the direction of Father William Cunningham, C.S.C., we rewrote our college bulletin, reorganizing it under the four basic areas of educational development: physical, intellectual, spiritual, social. The job was pretty thoroughgoing. Although it has been done twice since, the changes have been largely matters of rearrangement.

The revised bulletin made a complete dichotomy of the curriculum into upper and lower division courses. This obviated the *mélange* of students from freshmen to seniors in the same classes. The new bulletin provided for senior comprehensive examinations as the final academic hurdle before the Bachelor's degree.

In December of the first year, the dean of women developed an ulcer that perforated. Before the third week of January she was hurried to the hospital for an emergency appendectomy. At midnight, three days later, her assistant woke me with, "I feel like a horse thief to bother you, but I am as sick as I can be." Our doctor came posthaste. We bundled Sister into his car and drove her to the hospital for the second emergency operation in three days. If asked the score at that dark moment, I could have said: "Two down and a whole semester to go!"

With these inauspicious precedents, Sister Maria Pieta undertook the work of dean of women. Our dean of studies attended the National Convention of the Association of American Colleges that year with me at Atlanta, Georgia. There we met Dr. Eugenie Leonard, dean of women at Syracuse, through whom Julie Read, one of her graduates, came to us as our first lay assistant dean of women. We could not have been more fortunate.

Great teachers are the first requisite for a good school. We set about following Mother Pauline's sustained precedent of finding them, making them, and keeping them. Two of our youngest sisters were completing training in library science at Saint Catherine's College, St. Paul. A third was at the Art Institute in Chicago. Candidates for Doctors' degrees in English and German were at work at the University of Notre Dame and the Catholic University. This was the *status quo* in 1934. Since that time, the Sisters of the Holy Cross on our faculty have qualified for Doctors' degrees at the Catholic University, Columbia, Harvard, Laval, University of Notre Dame, Yale, and in our own School of Sacred Theology. Many have earned their Masters' degrees from graduate schools in their particular fields. The process goes on. This, I hope, is only a report of progress. Academic processions, Honors convocations, participation

in professional conferences, conventions, and societies are all a part of it. Changes like growth occur so unobtrusively that we are unaware of them until we look back across the decades.

A good school needs good students. What makes a student good? "Responsibility," I depose. Let transcripts tell the story proper to them. Working with a comparatively small student body, less than three hundred, we set up officers and an organization for such student government as the girls themselves were willing to undertake. Today one finds it strange that they had to have this form of student life almost thrust upon them. Frankly, they did not want to take the blame for things. Through the processes of normal, thoughtful, well-directed growth, the student body today is capable and responsible for undertaking wise and constructive judgments and procedures for its thousand and more members.

In 1934 Lady Nicotine had none but a surreptitious place in Catholic colleges for women. The childishness and dishonesty of our solution to the problem of smoking on campus affronted me. With the approval of every parent, save one, we opened our recreation rooms to smoking. The long lines and queues of secret smokers to the attics of our dormitories and the boathouse on the campus were ended. Some of us denounced the procedure as the breaking down of the sacrosanct tradition and respectability of Saint Mary's until we made our summer visits to our own homes and found them in soft hazes of cigarette smoke. That taught us tolerance and better judgment.

Saturday and Sunday afternoons, chairs in the social hall were pushed back and the famous tea dances of the thirties and forties became the prevailing social mood from three to five. Occasionally, a detached boy drifted into my office. These campus nephews liked to talk to someone for whom they would not have eventually to buy a steak dinner. Young Tom Dooley, a premedical student and a gifted musician, came often. Sitting at the piano for much of the afternoon and playing for the other boys and girls to dance, he would find himself at the end of ends without a companion. I was not much compensation for his generosity in playing for an afternoon of dancing. Still, I think he did not mind too much. He was trying at the time to decide whether to become a doctor or a concert pianist. He needed to get all the reasons out in the open. He left college for medical school and from there went into service.

Two years ago, on a summer afternoon, I heard the piano in our lounge speaking the musical language of only one person I knew. I went in. Tom Dooley was playing. I couldn't have mistaken it. He was just back from Viet-Nam—the chronicler of his own Christlike service there under the title, *Forgive Us Our Trespasses*. Released from service, Dr.

Dooley returned to practice medicine in Laos, the northernmost accessible part of Indochina. This man is a Samaritan. He came back to the United States early in 1958, with the manuscript of his second book, *The Edge of Tomorrow*, now between boards, and his irresistible appeal for the most Christlike help. The dozens of young doctors, the scores of nurses and other helpers, the thousands of dollars worth of medication and equipment that have met his appeal provide a great commentary on the alleged materialism of our time. We have not been asked to do things hard enough for us.

When we discarded tablecloths in our refectory we feared that we had lost our last claim to gentility. When we changed the hour for dinner from noon to night we hoped that we had reclaimed it somewhat. When we set up our staff student service program in the dining room we were certain, and we still are, that we offer in it the best opportunity for student self-help on any campus today. Built like, but preceding the program of nurses' service in operation during the war, it enables students to complete their college in five years or less, being completely self-supporting, even to incidentals, and free of student loans.

We are among the few boarding schools maintaining family service for all our meals. The Saga Food Service provides this on the level of a fine art. This we have installed during the past two years. Our three meals a day at which we all gather as a family we consider our biggest and our best course in Western civilization.

An even better precedent we set for all civilization in 1941. At the Liturgical Conference held in Saint Meinrad's, Indiana, that year, Monsignor Morrison met me in the corridor with the abrupt, "Sister, will you accept Negro students at Saint Mary's?" For years I had been waiting for this question. I knew only one answer, the right one. If it emptied the school, we would enroll Negro girls in residence. My answer to Monsignor was simply, "Yes, Monsignor, we will." "Good," he said, "I'll send you a dandy." That ended discussion of race problem as a school policy, but not repercussions! Southern parents wrote enraged letters telling me that as a Northerner I did not know what I was doing. I answered that, however conditioned by my own upbringing, I was acting under the direction of Cardinal, then Archbishop, Stritch who had been born and reared in Memphis. A round robin of protest went to him. He sent me a copy of his reply, with the reassurance, "You are right, Sister. Stick to your guns!"

Carmelita Desobrey, a beautiful Creole girl, came to Saint Mary's in September. By the third semester she led the school academically. She stood first on the Honor Roll, with a major in science.

XXII

Concrete and Catwalks

Sister Laurita and I were walking across the campus one spring morning in 1937.

"We never get anything for the home economics department," she said, by way of information.

"What do you need?" I asked.

"A model practice house," she answered.

"Have you ever asked for one?"

"No," she said, thinking such a request futile.

"Suppose you ask," I suggested.

She did, and so did I. Charles Riedinger and his sister Caroline had given us five thousand dollars in memory of the fiftieth and twenty-fifth graduations of their mother and their sister. On this foundation the Riedinger house was built. Blessed and dedicated on June 11, 1939, it has been a house, a home, a school for all home economics majors since. They are asking now for newer and better food and clothes construction laboratories. We are listening.

At Saint Mary's for a brief two weeks in the summer of 1925, I ran again and again along the catwalks in Le Mans Hall, then in concrete forms. Intuitively, I found the area designed for the library. It was planned chiefly as two beautiful reading rooms with adjoining offices. A library proper was contemplated for some future time. But when? Why need libraries break one's heart? I tried to apply the sedation, "It isn't my problem." That was more than ten years earlier. Now it had become my problem.

Every possibility had been exhausted to make possible what had been from the first an impossible situation. I have told students plenty of times that we can have anything we want if we want it badly enough. We wanted a new library just that badly.

Mrs. Anna White Rempe loved Saint Mary's to the extent of sending her seven daughters here to high school and college. She invited us up to Chicago for luncheon on a day and with the Victorian formalities of candles and flawless service, in the presence of her three sons and her seven daughters, she gave us a check for twenty-five thousand dollars. This built the Anna White Rempe room in our new library. A bequest from the Breen family, friends of the Sisters of the Holy Cross from Fort Wayne, added forty-one thousand dollars. Our alumnae turned

mendicants for the rest. Frances Lyons, Helen Holland Voll, and Marie Broussard Weir set up an office on the campus.

Our community was to celebrate the centenary of its founding in 1941. This centenary formed the commencement theme. Groundbreaking for the Alumnae Centennial Library was for us the major event. Five minutes later would have been too late. Suddenly, we were in war. The library was the last major building done in this area for the duration. Bishop Noll laid the cornerstone amid torrential rain.

Even when I came as a student to Saint Mary's in 1906 the sisters were talking of an auditorium. Anyone knowing Saint Angela's, our hybrid Exhibition Hall, will understand why. By the 1940's classes had begun to speculate on which would be the first to graduate from this mythical new building. Meanwhile, the art department had been persuaded to exchange their dubious two rooms in Holy Cross for the very attractive and larger area vacated by the library. By what I facetiously call the triumph of the Teutonic mind, we metamorphosed the place into studios, workrooms, display areas, without pounding a nail.

But we were only temporizing. Our growing community had absorbed old classrooms and much of the music hall. A new convent now in blueprint took the right-of-way over what was left. On Easter Sunday, 1952, Sister Mary Agnes, our superior, and I went over to the administration building to greet our superior general, Mother Rose Elizabeth. She stood on the porch and pointed to the demolition entailed by the new construction.

"What shall we do for a music hall?" I asked, as I added one more to her many problems.

"Build your fine arts building," was Mother's reply.

For ten years we had considered and rejected plans for this will-o'-the-wisp. Five years earlier Mother assured me that she did not believe that I could undertake it. This I had considered final and had stopped thinking about the matter. Mother herself provided new curtains and drapes for Saint Angela's Hall. We cleaned up the beautiful, mellowed old wood. Today was Easter. The fine arts building was about to arise from our dead hope.

Astounded at Mother's ultimatum, I stammered, "When?"

"Now," she answered promptly.

"Now is tomorrow and I am going to Des Moines. Shall I stop in Chicago to find an architect?" I asked inclusively.

"Yes, do!" in her most benign manner.

Noah was a hundred years old when God set him to building the Ark. God willed the Ark. John the Baptist was born to Zachary and Elizabeth when they were well past their youth. God wished John. Per-

haps He wished the fine arts building. Intoxicating possibility! Only under such recurrent intoxications did it come to be.

Sister Francis Jerome had been for the fifty years of her community life one of our best loved sisters. For years before my return to Saint Mary's as president and until her death in 1948, she was vice-president: kindly, tolerant, patient with me in all my wild extremes. At her death she left by will close to half a million dollars, her portion of a family inheritance. This, her will specified, should be used for a fine arts building.

Her brother John became increasingly impatient to see this building in blueprint and in brick and concrete. On our return from Des Moines he met and took us to his friend, Charlie Murphy of Naess and Murphy, Architects. Within a fortnight, Mr. Murphy and three of his company met with our superiors in my office. They were authorized to begin studies for a fine arts building to include an auditorium for about a million dollars.

Meanwhile, we had gone through the experience of organizing a board of lay trustees and had had at least three semiannual meetings. Meanwhile, also, as an act of God, a fire from spontaneous combustion, so we still believe, broke out in one of our science laboratories. Our entire science department was housed in the front of our freshman residence hall. The damage was not great and was well covered by insurance. But the trustees insisted that a science hall take priority over any other possible building.

Tom Mulig of Naess and Murphy was interrupted in his dream and made a blueprint for a fine, sturdy, adequate science hall, costing something over half a million. The cornerstone was laid in bitter wind and rain. The building went into service the second semester of 1954.

Again, blueprints for the fine arts building were labored over. At their completion, on July 22, 1954, we encountered our last delay. The architects, with admirable patience, waited. In December we were instructed to go ahead.

On January 12, 1955, bids were let and on February 26, 1955, ground was broken. Again, it rained. Responding to Mr. Murphy's review of plans and purposes at the program of the day, I said that our auditorium was moving from myth to mud and that our buildings, planted in the rain, had flourished and borne rich fruit. This continues to be true.

Of none is it more true than of Moreau Hall, the name chosen for the entire center. Appropriately, the auditorium is called by the family name of Sister Francis Jerome, O'Laughlin Auditorium. Years ago, Eric Gill wrote, "Take care of goodness and truth, and beauty will take care of herself." I had not found this so. Perhaps because our care of good-

ness and truth had been mistaken or inadequate. At any rate, I had watched beauty go begging for a home and a family. I knew that of the trinity—goodness, truth and beauty, each an equation for God—beauty is the most palpable, the most irresistible. I have called it God's visibility. This explains to me the ever-prevailing diabolism by which the devil takes such prompt and seductive possession of physical and human beauty. So perilous a gift is it that God can scarcely trust us with much at any time in any form. The grossness with which celluloid has exploited the beauty of our young womanhood sickens me. We wanted to build a home for beauty, as Gerard Manley Hopkins had said,

> "Give beauty back, beauty, beauty, beauty, back to
> God, beauty's self and beauty's giver."

The cornerstone for the O'Laughlin Auditorium was laid November 12, 1955, by Bishop Pursley. It bears the inscription from Chesterton, ART IS THE SIGNATURE OF MAN. Helen Hayes, First Lady of the American Theater, was the first person to address an audience from the magnificent stage. She quoted to listeners from coast to coast Portia's great plea, "The quality of mercy is not strained."

The class of 1956 was the first to graduate from the new auditorium. Honorary degrees were conferred for the first time on the recipients: His Eminence Francis Cardinal Spellman, our baccalaureate speaker; Walter Kerr, our commencement speaker; Mother Rose Elizabeth, C.S.C., Jean Charlot, Sister Esther, S.P., Helen Hayes, Maria Augusta Trapp, and our veteran trustees: William Cotter, John O'Laughlin, William Miller, Bernard Voll.

Since that time the O'Laughlin Auditorium has become a home for the NBC Opera Company, with our dear Samuel Chotzinoff and Peter Adler inspiring it, the Ruth Page Chicago Opera Ballet, the South Bend Symphony Orchestra, the South Bend Civic Music Association. Marian Anderson has been one among many great guest artists. Mr. and Mrs. Martin Browne have exemplified the possibilities of the great English Mystery Cycles. Robert Speaight has spent months in successive years directing and producing the best of Shakespeare comedy.

The story is long and, please God, just begun. The chapters on music and art thrill with both promise and accomplishment. The frescoes of Jean Charlot, the designs of Norman Laliberte stand as two cases for many. Our century plant has blossomed.

In defense of a fine arts building, if such is needed, let us remember that the fine arts—poetry, music, the dance—are as old as human history. The writing of books, the liberal arts, developed centuries later. The

useful arts are youngest of all. In a capsule, poetry is thousands of years older than soap. I am inclined to rearrange Eric Gill's neat statement to read: "Take care of beauty, and goodness and truth will take care of themselves."

XXIII

Wanting Things Badly Enough

Saint Mary's academy was opened in Bertrand, Michigan, in 1844. In 1855 it was moved six miles south to its present Indiana campus. That campus the academy and the college shared until 1945 when the purchase of the Erskine Estate on Twyckenham Road provided a beautiful home and a dream of a campus for the academy. It released Holy Cross Hall for freshman residence.

With the providential Holy Thursday fire in the old science laboratories and the new science hall, good space on two floors was provided for additional rooms. Summer after summer reconstruction has tried to divide and subdivide possible bedrooms for the increasing enrollments.

The studios vacated by the art department were promptly converted into Queen's Court, the prettiest residence section in Le Mans Hall. All our building for the past twenty years has been for classrooms, and yet we have not enough. None of our building has been for residence. And again, we have not nearly enough.

Our Sister-faculty members live great distances from their classrooms, great distances from their offices. We are wanting a faculty residence hall. Are we wanting it badly enough?

Our student infirmary was among the buildings absorbed in community reorganization. Our guest facilities shared this process. We are listening to the cry of the home economics department for larger better laboratories. Do we want these badly enough? Who runs this good school? Who takes the blame for things?

A classroom building, releasing classrooms in Le Mans Hall for residence for one hundred upperclass students presents the least expensive first-aid. It would scarcely care for more than the girls now living in Regina Hall, a building which we rent from our convent, and the forty upperclass students still in Holy Cross Hall. A sister visited us not too long ago to learn something about college administration.

"Do you teach?" she asked.

"No, Sister, I don't," I answered.

"Nothing at all?" in surprise.

"No, I don't," in quasi apology.

"Well, what do you do?"

This is my question exactly now. What do I do? If I want a thing badly enough! How badly can that be? We must have faculty residence, classrooms, home economics laboratories, infirmary.

We have wanted a foreign language laboratory, equipped for listening and recording, available for music and speech as well. It is now installed, thirty-two units, which can be doubled if necessary.

Our library is asking for more carrels, more stack space. A library is the stomach of the school. It must be big and healthy enough to support good intellectual life. It, too, must be fed.

We have wanted a student recreation center, less formal than our parlors, set up for all the amenities of campus life—and for our seven thousand possible guests. From the emerging realities, it would seem that we have wanted this badly enough.

Let us come to the business of college proper, the intellectual life. All of our present faculty we want to remain with us as the built-in part of our family. We wish that they could be augmented by half as many more equal to them in loyalties and abilities. This would make possible time for research, for writing, for other creative work. It would provide sabbatical leaves at proper intervals. For these there is the essential want for funds to compensate adequately every teacher. These things must come. We want them badly enough.

I find myself wishing for developed tastes and desires for the classics, for Greek drama, medieval mystery plays now enjoying healthy revivals in England and in various centers in our country. Our sisters and students are learning to evoke music from recorders; perhaps the plays will follow the pipers. Then there are the gracious arts of reading aloud together, of listening to our great music, of looking at our great art as long and as often as we would like—and time for these. Time will not be enough. We shall need forever!

Surely, a goodly company share with me fervent desires for more students who can spell, read, write; students who can and will think, who know experimentally that there are no easy ways and are glad of it. Once in my teacher's life a freshman came to my office, put her class schedule on my desk and said, "I am taking these subjects to develop my mind." Who among us does not hunger and thirst for students to join her in this quest, who not only "take" subjects but keep them, assimilate them!

I even want students who do not, as Robert Louis Stevenson has said, "swallow the universe like a pill," girls who know trees by their first names, who love them better in winter than in summer and recognize

them in their nude beauty. I should like them to watch for the unfurling of oak leaves in dubious greens, coral pinks and creams, delicate as the details of some old French tapestries; beech buds unfolding like small, perfect fans in the sun. Why shouldn't girls of eighteen mark their spring calendars by the first bird songs, the first spring wildflowers as well as by their first orchids? I want them, these girls of ours, to open their arms, their eyes, their lives wide to the universe, to understand palpably that "Underneath are the everlasting arms." I want them to be less bewildered with our noisy generation, less afraid of its loneliness because One who has asked to share it says, "Be still and know that I am God."

Is this the way to be a teacher? Are these the things to want?

XXIV

The Education of Sister Lucy

FOR overlong, many of us had struggled with our academic consciences and put the seal of discretion on our lips over the flagrant *status quo* in Catholic education. Even recent indictments of the mediocrity of the Catholic mind scarcely advert to the untrained or inadequately trained sisters who have been teaching generations of parish schoolchildren. The onus of such mental limitations, as are attributed peculiarly to Catholics, has been placed in part on our uncultured immigrant parents.

Permit me this parenthesis: On my father's side, I am the child, on my mother's the grandchild of German immigrants. From the time I was old enough to spend pocket money my father left the cash drawer in his shop at my disposal with the single instruction that I record the amount of money I withdrew. This unique procedure was never questioned or abused. Even now, I honor the memory of my father for the complete and mature and responsible confidence that he placed in me. It was not the attitude of an ignorant or an uncultured parent.

My mother selected and ordered some of the most excellent books in elementary German that I have ever seen. In the north woods in 1890 she knew how and where to buy books. No Book-of-the-Month Club, then nonexistent, could have made choices for her. These and all our books bore this inscription in her clear script: "My books are my friends. Treat them kindly." Now I, with degrees—earned and honorary—and a faculty equally qualified, do not and possibly cannot impress such respect among our students for the textbooks that do so much to fashion their minds. These are bartered for before courses are over. Book sales and exchanges are college business. Last spring, at a meeting of Intellectual and Cultural

Affairs, I adverted to this in defense of the uncultured immigrant parent. I was laughed down with the statement that textbooks today deserve no better fate. If so, something is wrong somewhere! Perhaps with the commercialized and lucrative business of making textbooks. But not with our European parents. Professor Gregory Zilboorg, the great, lovable psychologist, came to my rescue:

"I am an immigrant," he said in his big mellow voice. "My mother is illiterate. She can neither read nor write."

End of parenthesis!

To my question, "Why do non-Catholics as a group dislike Catholics?" a very good Quaker friend of mine and a distinguished educator hesitated while I elaborated, "Are they afraid that we will have an American pope or a Catholic president?" Then he answered, "I think that perhaps we do fear your power, but we are jealous of the care that you take of your young people." Here for all time is the case for the Catholic school. With inadequate plants and only partially trained teachers for three hundred years, we have been taking care of our young people. The valor of the achievement is not always patent to us. The non-Catholic sees the sheer courage and conviction in it.

At no time could this be a brief for incomplete teacher preparation. Needs imperative for schools and staff have precipitated young sisters scarcely out of the novitiate into parish schools. For years, a stubborn group of the college section of the National Catholic Educational Association had dreamed of, had asked for a section in the Association for teachers' preparation. Reasons for refusal now seem absurd. Then they were effective, final, and fatal.

At the meeting of the Association in San Francisco in the spring of 1948, I asked for the last time that such a section be authorized and put to work. Approval was overwhelming. The chairmanship of a committee to care for the matter devolved on me. We called a meeting at once of all who were interested. Officers were appointed and plans for our next meeting in Philadelphia begun.

We projected a program in which the training procedures then in operation in six teaching orders were submitted. In addition a possible schedule was formulated by which a young sister beginning her education in a postulancy of one year, continuing through two or three years after her canonical novitiate, could earn her teacher's credentials and degree. The plan was set up for a hypothetical Sister Lucy. It worked beautifully on paper.

Sisters from many communities attended our summer session that year. We chose the nucleus of our program from among them. In the end, papers were assigned to and accepted by Mother M. Eucharista,

C.S.J.; Monsignor Clarence E. Elwell; Mother M. Dorothea, O.S.U.; Sister M. Augustine, O.S.F.; Brother Emilian, F.S.C. My own paper presented the problem and our hopes of a solution.

Copies of all the papers were on my desk months before the meeting, excellent, better than I had dreamed, good enough, I knew, for publication. Our new section on Teachers' Education was assigned the smallest committee room, the last hour of the last day of the convention. The room assigned proved absolutely too small. We moved in and out of the cafeteria for the same reason. We settled in the gymnasium with people sitting on the steps and in the aisles. The Education of Sister Lucy proved the big event of the week. The tremendous, spontaneous response to the cause established its importance and its need.

Opening the meeting, I said that the papers to be presented seemed to me to be eminently worth printing. Through whistling, squealing, temperamental microphones the heroic authors read them. Those present will never forget the hour. At the end the meeting exploded with questions. We were importuned to have the entire texts printed. Within two months a neat brochure, "The Education of Sister Lucy," was off the press at South Bend.

By dexterous choices of nominating committees at our April meeting in Boston in 1950, Monsignor Elwell and Sister Augustine, O.S.F., were elected to office for the coming year. Presently the superior general of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart at Monroe, Michigan, asked me to come to the mother house to talk over with her council some of the needs, the feasibilities and the professional "musts" of this tentative program. Later, Sister Patrick and her companion came to Saint Mary's to continue planning. Surveying the problems of organization, ways and means, Sister Patrick said, "Sister Emil is just the person to do this." Sister Patrick was right.

When the Institute for Religious held its first great historic meeting at the University of Notre Dame in 1952 I was asked to present the case of completed professional training for religious teachers before they were assigned to their life apostolate of teaching. During that same session Sister Patrick made her memorable plea, "Share the sisters." The facts of sister-shortage, sisters' education, sisters' salaries were emerging. We were coming at this late hour to the use of reason.

Sister Lucy had been admitted to college. I leave her education to those qualified and authorized to educate her, the mothers general, the mothers provincial in the organized Sister-Formation Program.

XXV

The Idea of a University

You will remember that in the strength and confidence of my youth I had incorporated Newman's *The Idea of a University* into a senior English course at Saint Mary's. Most persons know the book for the definition of a gentleman, who most of them never suspect is the perfect social pagan. Newman made clear to me that of all sciences the science of God is the most perfect and that a Christian college should, if consistent, give it the place of pre-eminence in the curriculum, make it the integrating subject, giving sequence, importance and validity to all other subjects. I knew of no liberal arts college organized on this plan. Frank Sheed had said bluntly, and more than once, "There is no place in the United States where a layman can study Theology."

Among prevailing educational affronts and blackouts, this was the worst. In our long and golden age of science we had made no place for, given no thought to the queen of sciences, the science of God. Frank Sheed's statement gave me no peace. Were we to let these flagrancies continue? Even worse, the courses of religion that were offered in our colleges were the dullest and the most poorly taught in the curriculum. We had no graduate schools in which to prepare young teachers of Theology on levels equal to their preparation in profane subjects. Priests qualified to teach Theology were occupied otherwise. Religion was the last and least interesting of all subjects taught by the least prepared and frequently poorest teachers.

In spite of the war, with shattered enrollments, accelerated programs in the men's colleges, the Problems Committee of the National Catholic Educational Association in 1942 decided that the preparation of teachers of religion in college constituted our biggest problem. The task of investigating possibilities and solutions was assigned to me.

No Midwestern college graduate school was prepared to set up the program. The Catholic University answered "No" to our applications to its School of Divinity. Bishop Edwin O'Hara, on our campus for a day, suggested Saint Mary's as a proper place. I demurred at the seeming presumption of the thought.

"The place is ideal," the Bishop suggested, "living conditions excellent, beautiful spiritual resources, a fine library. May the Executive Director of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine authorize the opening of a School of Sacred Theology at Saint Mary's?"

Overwhelmed, and authorized by his rhetorical question, I thanked

him and began a new chapter in Catholic education. Frank Sheed would finally be answered.

At the next meeting of the College Section of the NCEA I reported my failure to get help from our graduate schools. Everyone understood the reasons: war, G.I.'s, acceleration. We were at a dead end. Had anyone any ideas? No one broke the impasse. Then, with that strange impulse outside my will, I stood up and said:

"I do not know how we will do it, but this summer we will offer at Saint Mary's a six-weeks' graduate program in Theology, without tuition and without credit. I regret that we shall have to make a nominal charge for maintenance. We will send you details in a fortnight."

Everyone thought the gesture promising and thanked me. Then we went home.

Father Gerald Ellard, S.J., was in the midst of a triduum for the students of Saint Mary's when I arrived. I told him my story and asked his help.

"I am with Father Lord's Circus this summer and have only one free week," he said to me.

"All right, come that week and teach double time," I clinched the possibility.

"Why don't you ask Father Gruenthaner?" he said. "He will be free and would like to come, I believe." This proved true.

Monsignor William Newton had one week free. Their times clicked miraculously. We had three teachers, doing double time, in succession, for six weeks.

Eighteen sisters registered in June, 1943. Monsignor Newton initiated the school. Father Ellard followed. The experience was pentecostal. Father Michael Gruenthaner, S.J., arrived for the final month. He taught from a Hebrew text; he dramatized the Pentateuch. He knew every sister by name. He read all the funnies. He went to all the movies. Physically, he resembled Chesterton. In every way, he was the big person on the faculty.

At the end of two weeks I tried to talk to him about plans for the next year. He evaded me. At the end of the third week he was equally elusive. Finally, I corralled him in that old curiosity shop, my inner office.

"Father," I said, "our need for graduate work in Scripture and Theology is obvious. What can we do?"

"You haven't the curriculum," he said gruffly.

"I know," I answered helplessly, "and I don't know how to make one; but you do and I think that you should help me."

"You have no graduate library," his second objection.

"That is true, and until now we haven't needed one. But with a thousand dollars a year don't you think that you could buy a few books?" I countered.

"You haven't got a faculty," as if to overwhelm me.

"Father," I said, "if the Church has no one to teach us our religion, then I think that the Church has failed."

At this time I did not know that his first three answers were never his real ones. He peered at my indignant face from under his bushy eyebrows like a Hebrew prophet.

"I have said everything that I can to discourage you," he said gently. "Now I think that I will try to help you."

So the School of Sacred Theology came into being: curriculum, library, faculty, chancellor.

To honor it, to honor the centenary of our community and our collegiate foundation, Bishop O'Hara and the Episcopal Committee of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, under whose auspices the new translation of the New Testament was authorized, held their three-day conferences at Saint Mary's during the summers of 1943 and 1944.

With Father Gruenthaner, he was instrumental in obtaining the approval of the Holy Father, through the ministration of His Eminence Cardinal Pizzardo.

The school, now fifteen years old, has initiated graduate study of Sacred Theology and Scripture far beyond the United States. From the beginning, students from Europe and India have enrolled. Because of it, I believe, I was invited to membership on the Executive Committee for Women Religious of the United States of America, the only member not a superior general.

This committee met for the first time at the University of Notre Dame in 1952. During this first Institute for Religious, the secretaries of The Most Reverend Arcadio Larraone, and Father Paul Philippe, O.P., himself, spent hours in discussing our program, assembling literature and textbooks for use in Rome. They were incorporated, I believe, in the program of Regina Mundi, the graduate school of Theology for sisters, opened in 1953 in Rome.

For fifteen years our great teaching communities of men: Holy Cross, Jesuits, Precious Blood have filled our need for teachers with their best. Congruously, but also generously, the provincials of the Dominican Fathers have staffed our graduate and undergraduate schools with teachers who make Theology and Scripture the best courses in the curricula. We can never replace or repay them.

Father Leo Arnoult, O.P., Sister Augustella, and Ann Condit are engaged in a monumental work of selecting, collecting and trans-

lating writings of the Fathers on Sacramental Grace. Father Mark Egan, now our chancellor, with his zealous staff collects and circulates weekly among the faculty current pronouncements from the Holy Father on subjects relating to their departments or their interests. They entitle their project, significantly, "The Living Voice of Christ."

We are here, Cardinal Newman, at Saint Mary's. Theology is the queen of sciences and the integrating core of the entire academic life of the college. Once Saint Thomas might have had to prove that women have souls. Now he can regard happily their Thomistic minds and the home in which they honor his *Summa*.

XXVI

A Thousand Girls and Seven Thousand Boys

AT THE end of my year in Europe I asked Sister Verda Clare, "What have you missed most from home this year?" I don't remember her answer, but mine was, "Not the coffee and not the plumbing. What I have missed most is the American girl." I believe that I would have the same answer today. All but six of these my first seventy years have been spent in school, more than fifty in boarding school, living with, breaking bread with American girls, not by the dozen but the hundreds and thousands. Since I have traded myself in to God for all potential daughters, He has given me this family of girls to live with and for, to love.

Let me name just a sampling: the little brown-eyed girl who used to dress up in her mother's wedding dress to write to me and who has never failed over forty years to send a Christmas candle; the pink-and-white girl who used to pick up spots of moonlight on the stair landings going up to bed; the enigmatic girl for whom the law of contradiction did not exist and whom, for all that, I persisted in believing in. The mountain hikers, the wildflower lovers, the first robin girls know who they are. And so does the girl who never handed in her compositions, the one who always did, the girl who spelled *and* with two *d*'s; the two true loves who named their daughters "Madeleva," both eventually going through Saint Mary's as "Junior." Where is the friend who always brought a rose back from town, the one with whom I walked under an umbrella in the snow? Where are you, my dear, who shattered my world one day at lunch by asking innocently, "Sister, did you ever teach?"

And, Anne, do you remember your coming to my office, overwhelmed by a sense of duty, to ask,

"Sister, I wonder if you know how dissatisfied the girls are with Saint Mary's."

"Well, Anne," I answered you, "perhaps I don't. But do the girls know how dissatisfied I am with Saint Mary's? No one is half so dissatisfied as I."

"You," you exclaimed incredulously.

Then I explained:

"Suppose that at eighteen you were all perfectly satisfied: what would you have to work for, to try for? Suppose that we were filled with complacency about school, what petrified big and little prigs we would be? Eighteen is the time at which to be dissatisfied, to be reaching out, to be looking up."

Sometimes, when asked how many students we have I answer facetiously:

"Over a thousand girls and seven thousand boys."

In many ways, the second half of my count is untrue. Many Notre Dame men are now married. Many more never come over to Saint Mary's campus. Their reasons are good and usually rest on common sense. But the presence of seven thousand college men on our horizon contributes subtly and, I am sure, very constructively to our world. We know it to be the ideal situation for social life, intercollegiate dramatics, music, debate.

I want to submit these few campus nephew friendships of my own. Twenty years ago a young law student from San Francisco came into my office with Sister Marie Rosaire. He was interested in printing and in Christian art. "Harry, why don't you make some bookmarks, vertical, but good texts, good type, paper, design?" I asked. Harry acted on the suggestion. The designs were executed in our art studios. Harry did the printing in his small shop in South Bend. This was the beginning of the Berliner McGinnis printing business now located in Nevada City, California, and an authentic exponent of Christian art.

One day during the war, four servicemen, all non-Catholic, came over from Notre Dame to call. They had been students at Saint John's College, Annapolis. President Stringfellow Barr and Dean Scott Buchanan, both my good friends, had told them to come over for a visit. After a bit of small talk, I suggested that we discuss something serious, something up to the level of Saint John's; eschatology, for instance. The result of our talk on the four last things—death, judgment, hell, heaven—was more visits, fine stimulating discussion, and a gift from one of them of T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*. Presently the boys left for overseas. One

of them wrote, "Imagine my delight in picking up in a London bookshop the other day a beautiful edition of Saint Thomas' *Treatise on the Angels*. This was a not unhappy sequel to our talk on the four last things."

A Mother's Day brought me another quartet of Notre Dame boys. They wanted copies of my verse for gifts to their mothers. After providing these, I said,

"I have a gift for each of you from your Mother also." I gave each a copy of Saint Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort's *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin*.

More than a year later, I was called to the Great Hall. A handsome, Spanish-looking boy smiled at me.

"You don't remember me," he said.

I didn't.

"You gave us some books more than a year ago and we didn't pay you for them," he volunteered.

"I didn't expect you to. We charged that to administration," I explained.

"Have you any more of those books?" he asked, putting twenty dollars in my hand.

"You must have managed your allowance well to save all this," I commented.

"I wait on table," he said.

Until his graduation we negotiated with copies of Saint Louis de Montfort's classic, the distribution of which he made an apostolate among the students. After a brilliant graduate career in France, he retraced the journeys of Saint Paul and of Saint Thomas as far as Goa in India before returning to America to teach philosophy in one of our excellent Eastern colleges. This is a long Mother's Day story.

One other campus nephew you must meet. He came over at the end of freshman year to tell me that he was not returning to Notre Dame, that he was going to the University of Chicago to get into the Great Books course. He spoke with some satisfaction of the Great Books he had read: Plato, Aristotle, Saint Thomas.

"Have you read the greatest book, Michael? Have you read the Bible?" I asked.

"No," he stuttered.

"Have you a Bible?"

Again he stuttered, "No."

"Michael, don't come over again until you have got yourself a Bible and have begun reading it!"

This was our goodbye for the summer.

He wrote during the vacation, reporting on having read the Bible, not once but twice; and returned to Notre Dame to finish in liberal arts.

With his military service fulfilled in Europe, his Doctorate in philosophy from a graduate school in France, he is now a Dominican Scholastic in the Middle West.

Four are a small but a good fraction of our seven thousand boys. I seem to have said overmuch for them in proportion to my girls. For these latter are mine by that divine CPA system by which God pays me back a hundredfold of His promise always and in all ways. For His reasons, which are mine and more, I love them, collectively and individually, every *A*, *B*, *C*, *D* and *E* girl of them. The *E*'s particularly. To the confusion of screening boards, what a surprising number of these dear young geese have grown into impressive, efficient swans! Many of them are now well over thirty, over forty. Daughters of not a few are Saint Mary's graduates, Saint Mary's mothers. What did I teach them? I have for answer perhaps the most astounding revelation of my life.

Gladys had come back to school to visit. We had not seen each other for years. Falling into an old-fashioned pattern, we walked on the river bank. Gladys had been a slow student, not always able to separate fact from fancy.

"Sister," she said with conviction, "there is one thing that you taught us that I shall never forget."

I purred with satisfaction. She reasserted her statement, past all possibilities of doubt. She agreed with me, she said, absolutely.

"What is this impressive truth, Gladys," I asked, "that I taught you that you will never forget?"

"Sister," she replied, "you taught us that there is no hell!"

Gladys has been with God now for these many years. He has blessed her with a Jesuit son and has, I hope, vindicated me.

For the past twenty-five years the invisible but palpable screen of administration has obscured me from our students much more than them from me. Personal acquaintance with a thousand is impossible. The amenities of meals with seniors, conferences with student officers always leave us better friends than they found us. In convocations I try to convince all Saint Mary's girls that they will never be more intelligent than they are in college. They will add to their stature by putting over the denominators of their intelligence the numerators of experience. This will change throughout their entire lives. I ask them to believe the boy friends who tell them that they are beautiful. Only the boys cannot know how beautiful they are or why. Being God's daughters they must

resemble Him. Because He is beauty, they must be beautiful. This is not a cosmetic concession. It is a family duty. Sometimes at convocations I suggest that we take off our bodies and sit in our souls. The experience, however vicarious, has values.

Thinking of Sir James Bridie's *Tobias and the Angel*, we put the boy friends in competition with their guardian angels. Crew cuts become less irresistible when seen in angelic light. By the same token, their own transcendence may suffer, set beside that of their own angels. Even so, watching them through the fugitive loveliness of their final teens, I wish that their parents could know their daughters as I do. Physical maternity and paternity are divine impelling forces of life. In her intellectual maternity, the religious teacher gives to her children the unique supernatural integrity of virginal love. Often, watching generations of girls living their four-year span of college life, I have quoted to myself Christopher Fry's:

> "O, God, the fabulous wings unused
> Folded in the heart"

following it with this other, describing superlatively Saint Mary's part in their upbringing:

> "Lives make and unmake themselves in her neighborhood
> As nowhere else."

XXVII

Educating Our Daughters as Women

AT THIS spring's meeting of our board of lay trustees one report was submitted that is basic to our consideration, that of the president of the college. This report made particular mention of the major and minor fields in which students were qualifying, or had already qualified, particularly in medical technology, in the nursing arts, in teaching. Attention focused rather sharply on specializations. We took a look at the advisability of training mathematicians for certain areas of engineering, of artists and photographers for commercial advertising.

The real objective of the students' education began to be pretty tangential. One blue-ribbon trustee asked the quietly innocent question, "Does anyone think of educating a woman as a woman?"

We were all pulled back sharply into place. We found ourselves facing the basic double problem in education which I now submit to you.

Should college educate a woman as a woman? If so, how? These are good questions. They suggest this third equally important one: Do all types of colleges educate our daughters equally well in their proper vocation of being women?

Running the gantlet of semantics, we may say that we always educate a woman as a woman. The quantity and quality of her womanhood depend very much, first upon herself, then upon the school that she attends, the school that is her Alma Mater. She will probably resemble her intellectual mother. I think that our trustee had in mind a quintessence of womanliness as a quality to be preserved, if not indeed to be developed in the education of our daughters. We, too, believe in the quintessence of womanliness as the very flower and fruit of the education of women.

These daughters of ours have had two choices in the kind of college training they wished: coeducation or education in the private college for women. They have chosen the latter. They have elected to be educated as women with an existential major and minor in womanhood. Their academic choices become effective in this environment, in this their essential existence. Their entire life, their worlds, their uncounted futures have already received certain determinations, certain directions by this momentous choice.

They might have gone to coeducational schools. Why not? Coeducational universities and colleges educate young women in exactly the same way as they educate men. In fact all our coeducational schools on the college level, until within the past decade perhaps, began as schools for men. Women were admitted first cautiously and by exception. Once matriculated, they proved, by and large, their ability to be educated as men or in curricula set up for men. Departments in home economics and nursing were gradually provided specifically for them. Today women constitute a large per cent of the enrollment in coeducational schools. Tens of thousands of our American girls are in college with hundreds of thousands of our American boys, and love it. They emerge as educated women, but not quite the same type of women they might have been if they had been educated as women.

These are merely statements of fact. They are neither a measure of the value of coeducation to our daughters, nor of our daughters to coeducation. No one expects the winner of a Vogue contest to run even a handicap with a fifth horseman of the historic Rockne four. No one weighs Miss America in the same balance as a varsity basketeer. But the value of girls on the coeducational campus is even greater, let me dare to say, more pervasive, more subtle, if you do not mind the overworked word. It has something to do with ties, with crew cuts, even with the

gentle arts of courtesy. Recently our local newspaper published the picture of a student carrying his girl friend's books. This was front-page news. Upon a time our best American university (according to the Chicago *Tribune*) reported that the registration of two pretty young women in the graduate school had effected a palpable return to the fine arts and courtesies of living among these superlative men students.

Girls do not go to coeducational schools for these reasons, but they do affect coeducation in these ways. Reciprocally, their coeducational colleges affect them. A girl, educated with and as boys are educated, will be a different woman from the girl educated as girls are and with them.

This does not imply that they are or should be educated exclusively by women. The better the college for women, the healthier ballast of scholarly men it will invite to its faculty. The mind of a growing girl realizes its capacities more perfectly under the tutelage of both scholarly men and scholarly women. This is equally true for boys. Men are quick and proud to recognize this.

But as boys, they do not clamor to go to colleges for women; they do not stampede our private schools and insist on being educated as girls are educated. We women have reversed the story of the Sabine women; we have put ourselves in a somewhat unintellectual position in our very endeavor to prove our intellectual equality with men.

For more than a century and a quarter our girls have had excellent colleges for women from which to choose. They select this type of school because they want this experience of the intellectual life as and with young women. Most of them do not change their minds on this score during their four undergraduate years. Since 1898 Saint Mary's College has been granting Bachelors' degrees to these daughters of hers.

Just how does she educate young women as women? She recognizes the great fields of knowledge, the sciences, the liberal arts, the fine arts. Since Theology is the queen of the sciences she makes it the core, the central and integrating subject in the curriculum. The student's entire experience becomes significant in terms of its relation to God. The student herself grows in the knowledge of her own supernatural stature in consequence, and of the supernatural world itself in which we all live and move. Her womanhood is measured by, and uplifted to the womanhood of Mary. This in itself educates her as a woman.

Around the science of Theology, the profane sciences range themselves in orders and potencies which atomic energies and electronics merely shadow. Women can move among these as freely as men, with the authentic freedom of truth. Such fields as cancer research, the care of premature babies are being successfully investigated by teachers and students in Catholic colleges for women. They are living in their Father's

house, working with His tools, playing at times perhaps with the fascinating toys He has provided for them. This is far from fancy. The greatest scientists know it to be a divine fact.

The liberal arts are most liberal, most liberating when they rest on complete rather than on partial truth. Here the Catholic college is the authentic exponent for the first sixteen centuries of Christian arts and sciences. One may say the same of the fine arts.

Our presentation seems to move to the Catholic versus the non-Catholic school irrespective of coeducation. This would be true if it were not equally true that girls study, learn, and respond to teaching differently from the ways boys do, and differently in classes with boys from in groups of girls only. Whatever the reasons for the delicate psychology governing these facts, they are facts. Girls achieve a type of womanhood when educated with girls which differs from the results of coeducation. We believe that this difference is a more refined, a more perfect womanhood, the quintessential womanliness which our blue-ribbon trustee had in mind.

Perfection is not achieved without costs. The women's colleges in the United States are monuments to the enterprise, the sacrifice, the fortitude of women. They are the most expensive to maintain, the last to benefit by philanthropy. Present educational crises are being met by colossal gifts from corporations, foundations, individuals.

At a recent meeting of the American Council on Education, the question was asked, "Where in the order of these gifts do colleges for women stand?" This is the answer which was given, not without embarrassment: "Gifts for education go, first, to schools with big names; second, to big schools; third, to coeducational schools; fourth, to women's colleges." We might add, last of all to Catholic women's colleges. Considering that half the parents of the world, all the mothers, the wives, the daughters, and the sisters are women this does not reflect gloriously to the generosity, the chivalry, the gratitude, or even the justice of the manhood of our country.

Yet, up and down our nation, these schools for our daughters are strongholds of the sciences, the liberal arts, the fine arts. As Pitirim Sorokin said in his address on "The Fine Arts in the College Curriculum" at a meeting of the Association of American Colleges last January: "Like the early medieval monasteries [they] are still the main centers of the history . . . and techniques of art with all of the *what, how* and *why* involved." Handfuls of sisters in our teaching communities of women, with or without money, are making this possible. They believe in educating our daughters as women. Years ago, Coventry Patmore wrote in a prelude to *The Angel in the House:*

"Ah, wasteful woman, she who may
On her sweet self set her own price,
Knowing man cannot choose but pay,
How has she cheapen'd paradise;
How given for nought her priceless gift,
How spoil'd the bread and spill'd the wine,
Which, spent with due, respective thrift,
Had made brutes men, and men divine."

The Sisters of the Holy Cross believe this. Saint Mary's College is their act of faith.

XXVIII

Dear Parents

FOR a quarter of a century you and I have been working together on the biggest, best business in the world, the business of education. That, for all of us, focused on your daughters. Don't you think that this is a good time and a good place for us to compare notes? I think that we will all love the experience. For purposes of narrative, let us take our daughters who are graduating this year.

Sixteen years ago you took your six-year-old daughters to school, to the first grade for the first time. I dare say that your memories of those little girls on that first day are among the most vivid of your lives.

For eight years you read and signed report cards and proudly chronicled the academic events of promotion. Came a day when this elementary intellectual progress reached its appointed climax. These daughters were graduated from the eighth grade. You have not forgotten the succession of flutters in which matter prevailed over mind and the eighth-grade graduation dresses competed in importance with the little girls who were in them.

September brought the sequel. On the Tuesday morning following Labor day, a bevy of very, very young ladies, a bit shy, a bit assured, entered high school. Your own educational pace quickened. Your own vocabularies jolted themselves into the uncanny canniness of high school language. Your own little girls were growing up almost too fast for you. Between the curricular and the extracurricular causes that educated, where was the pause that refreshed! With or without it, you hurried on through high school with these daughters, at typical American tempo. How well you share with them, but for different reasons, the memories

of the first date, the first formal, perhaps the first orchid. There were, too, the school paper, the class ring, the glee club, the class play and—the team.

The wonder of Advent, the mystery of Christmas, the prophetic realities of Lent and Easter unfolded as your daughters shared their deeper, holier high school experiences with you.

For four years you went to high school again. You relearned their lessons with these keen, bright girls who matched your minds but not your hearts, not your maturity.

Again you are swept out of the routine of class and homework into the climactic week of high school graduation. Somewhere in the limitless bright procession of flowers, cameras, cars, academic regalia, speeches, diplomas one gathers that here again an epoch in the intellectual life of your daughters has come to its end.

Sometime during the past four years you or they or all of you from many wheres in the United States and out of it had written to Saint Mary's College, Notre Dame, Indiana, for bulletins and other information, for application blanks and room reservations. By the beautiful mystery of the providence of God, lines of interest, attraction, decision all converged on this single place, this now beloved Alma Mater. It became your school long before you arrived with the first cargo of college impedimenta. You were all going to college.

When you arrived, Sisters of the Holy Cross welcomed you, lay faculty received you, big sisters identified themselves to their brand new little sisters. Elevators served you and sisters on the floors helped to set up the household gods in the daughters' rooms. And in that blessed oasis at the north end of the first floor of Holy Cross Hall you came to rest and the pause that refreshes—alumnae hospitality unlimited.

These daughters from out of the everywhere, with you their parents, matriculated as college freshmen and entered the field of undergraduate study. The sequel you may know perhaps more intimately than I do: the five days of work each week, with the two days of play that kept your Jills from being dull girls.

Who among the students does not recall every incident in that confused and apocalyptic first week, from the testing programs to the W.R.A. Mixer? Finally first things emerged: class cards, textbooks, teachers. In three miraculous days your daughters with that almost intuitive competence of youth had become, externally at least, self-reliant, up-and-coming freshmen, ready for the intellectual life ahead.

The surf and spray of first week activities had drawn back, leaving them and you in the deep sea of the Trivium. All of you have had your desperate struggle swimming it, sailing it, or walking on its difficult

waters. But in spite of real or imagined dangers, not one of you drowned.

Freshman year was a year of firsts: the first Sunday, the first home game, the first victory dance, the first retreat, the first Christmas party, the freshman formal, the first May procession at Saint Mary's.

Presently you found your daughters back at school, sophomores, assured, experienced, wisely efficient. They have had and can never forget the feeling of returning to school, as to home, of running up to their old rooms with their new occupants, of finding their own in Le Mans Hall. There was a whole summer to live over with friends in the brief day before classes began.

Then with an interruption scarcely more palpable than the ordinary weekend, school was in full session and so were you. What did our synchronized program of adult and sophomore education offer us this year: psychology, English, some intimations of what your majors were to be in your choices of sciences and mathematics.

Almost at once the students were involved in the Play Tournament, the Christmas play, Winter Carnival, Variety Show. What was the theme of the Cotillion, and what formals did they wear? The memories were as dear as the questions were vital. On Memorial Day the class presented a large American flag to the school. Six of your daughters carried it up to the altar in the chapel of the Holy Ghost to be blessed. Later they raised and saluted it, then lowered it to half-mast as they marched to the cemetery of Our Lady of Peace. There they visited the graves of the Sisters of the Holy Cross who had served our country as nurses in wartime.

Freshman year was a time of planting, sophomore year a time of growth, junior year was the flowertime of all their college days. Theirs was the Christmas party, the junior prom; theirs with seniors the yearbook, and cap and gown night. Theirs were the upper-class privileges, more desired at times than even a *magna cum laude*. Better than these were the growing maturity of judgment with which they began to weigh and to determine values, the sense of responsibility with which they approached the question of their vocations, God's will for them and their lives. Almost from their first week as freshmen they had found classes in Theology absorbing. Now some of them wanted to major in this queen of sciences, or at least to take as many electives as possible in it. Fathers, mothers, families, friends, all met on this the highest, holiest level of their lives.

In September the students returned to Saint Mary's for the final fruit-gathering year of this academic planting and sowing. There was poignancy, even then, as they greeted one another and began doing for the last time the things grown dear by three years of repetition and habit.

The Mass of the Holy Spirit for the opening of school had never been so solemn as this year when they marched to chapel for the first time in senior cap and gown.

The Christmas play, always dramatically beautiful and spiritually exalting, had never moved them more deeply. As guests at the perfect Christmas party, they realized a place of honor and such hospitality as only Saint Mary's can accord to her senior daughters. Later in the evening, until almost midnight in fact, gathered around the glory of the lighted Christmas tree and the blazing hearth fire, through that last hour of story and song and silence they knew deeply the love of Saint Mary's for her children, and of the child's love in the heart of each of them for this mother.

Dear parents, do you recognize the story; do you remember it? What have we forgotten? Long-distance calls, weekends at home, happy birthdays, the family rosary, the boy friends, your growing pride and joy in these growing girls who can share with you solid judgments on social and economic issues of the day, important allocutions of our Holy Father, gifts of art, music, speech; daughters who can return to you in wardrobes of their own construction and serve you dinners of their own cooking. You had sent them to college to learn to think for themselves, to form right judgments in the right ways, to live graciously with others, to prepare themselves, each one, for the great business of being a good woman. We hope that you are satisfied that their fulfillment has matched your desire.

Forgotten now is all the anguish of comprehensives, for joy that all these B.A.'s and B.S.'s are born into the world. Not to be forgotten is the final formal senior ball, the final Solemn Mass and dedication to Our Lady and her Seat of Wisdom. Each one of these held in itself an essential dedication of all your futures, a life with Mary in God.

For four years they have lived this life in the daily Mass, sung or spoken in dialogue with the celebrant, their active lay apostolate of teaching, social service, prayer, personal holiness. Students and parents have shared these years of college life and study. Together you can take back to a wider world this life of liturgical thinking and acting, this life of work and worship. Supposing you knew that your neighbor's home stood over the richest oil deposit in the world. Would you tell him, or would you let him live and die in ignorance of this great wealth? The fact is that millions of persons are living in potential possession of faith, the richest treasure in the world. You know the truth of this faith. Won't you tell your neighbors of it? Think of the men who have died for us for lesser goods. Tell your neighbors of the oil wells of truth under their house of life.

More than half of the people in the world are spiritual orphans. They do not know where they came from or where they are going. They do not know that God is their Father. They do not even know of His existence. You do. Would you keep the knowledge of their human father from orphans? Will you let an orphan-world live and die without even knowing this Father who has blessed you so much beyond His gifts to them? Will you not reclaim at least some of your spiritual brothers and sisters in the name of God, our Father?

A Catholic education is, as you know, an investment in eternity. Your new car will be old in a year. Presently it will have to be replaced. The child you educate in a Christian school is immortal. This education will never have to be replaced. It will last forever, and by that I mean *forever*. The school that you help to educate that child is in business with God for Him. The Catholic college is God's idea of education. He has let you share it. You have just completed vicariously a four-year college program with and for your daughters. Do you believe in it?

The American Council on Education published several years ago a book entitled *The Function of the Public Schools in Dealing with Religion*. To quote from the late Dr. George F. Zook, then president of the Council:

> "There is almost universal complaint that education has become too much a matter of learning facts and that there is altogether too little emphasis upon values and objectives. The schools and churches are therefore confronted with a common problem, but, because of the prevailing separation of church and state in this country, there is relatively little cooperation between religious organizations and the public schools. How to bring about a reconsideration of the relation of religion to education was the central theme of the conference."

The Catholic college exists for the purpose of defining and fulfilling the function of education in the matter of religion. The place of religion is the basic, the first place. So rooted, all other education becomes truly significant, even sanctified. All knowledge then reflects God's omniscience. The lowliest matter displays the wonder of His creative art. Only when we know matter as God's creation do we truly know it, can we love and use it intelligently. Only when we know the world as God's world and the place of His love can we be happily at home in it, can we be literally and holily secular.

Our journey into the past ends with a journey into the future. We know that it is precarious. We foresee that it will be hard. We tease ourselves with questions about peace, about security, forgetting that such security as many seek is mortal's chiefest enemy. You, parents, have

sought at Saint Mary's and have received precepts of peace, the tranquillity of ordered thinking, the disciplined training of an educated mind, a will sacramentally fortified, a life directed by and to God. It has been said that we are secure only when we can stand everything that can happen to us. On these terms I believe that you are secure. On these terms I ask you to take the peace of God, the security of God, as you know them, to your world.

XXIX

Lucy Rehearses Her Funeral

Lucy as you know is my mother. We often called her by her Christian name by way of endearment. She had no other given name. She needed none. The bright clarity of this unambiguous dissyllable was a lifetime mission to her and light to us. She always dared to be her name.

Lucy died of being ninety-four years old. The last two weeks of her life she spent in Saint Mary's Hospital, Duluth, Minnesota, of no other illness than this.

She was sitting up in bed when I arrived in her room from an overnight train trip. A white bed jacket cuddled around her shoulders. Her cheeks pink with excitement, her snowy hair caught back in soft waves by a narrow ribbon tied in a bow at the top of her head, her eager smiling eyes gave her the look of a little girl ninety-four years young. A pink carnation tucked in her hair ribbon added a dear touch of coquetry.

I had been summoned the day before to what the doctors thought might be the flickering out of the bright keen candle of my mother's life. We greeted each other with broken bits of happy laughter, question, answer.

"Mother was good to let you come," she said, referring to the religious superior of my community.

"We all know that you are the only mother that matters now," I assured her. "All the sisters send you their love and prayers. You know that you and father are everybody's sweethearts at the convent."

"Your father and the boys will be here later. We spend as much time as we can together," she said, adding, "Do you think that God is going to take me?"

"That is His secret, Mother," I answered. "No one would blame Him. You look and are so dear and good. It will be a tremendous experience for our little Lucy and one we want to share as intimately as we can with you."

Then most abruptly, "What shall I say when I see God?" she asked. One can hardly be prepared for so big a question. Trying to collect both my scattered wits and wisdom,

"Mother, say 'Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost,'" I answered.

"Yes," came her quick rejoinder, "and I'll say, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner.' For what do I need so much as His mercy, and if I have that what else do I need?" I agreed that her theology more than covered her needs and God's judgment.

We visited quietly during the day. Afternoon brought my father and two brothers. We planned that I should remain with mother until eleven when the night nurse came on. As I left her, shortly before midnight, our little sick-abed lady asked:

"Do you think God will come for me tonight?"

"No, Mother, I don't," I assured her.

"Why not?" she persisted with a shade of disappointment in her voice.

"You seem very well and strong to me," I answered.

"Yes," she said, quite as a matter of fact, "a person who can drink a bowl of soup and a cup of tea for supper isn't so badly off, is she? But if I need you, you will come, won't you?"

I promised her that I should be there at a moment's call as I kissed her good night and made a small sign of the Cross on her forehead.

By eight-thirty next morning I was back at her bedside, to find her neat and sweet and very much alive.

"You see, God doesn't want me yet," she laughed. Then continued, "What are you going to do with me after I die?"

"We will bury you, Mother," I said. "How would you like to be buried?" I guessed that our little dictator wanted to arrange all the details of her own burial.

"Put my black and white dress on me, unless there is another that you like better," she conceded, "and put new stockings on me. Don't let the undertakers doll me up. You know I always liked simple things. Mrs. Jacobson never had her hair curled until she was dead. Don't let them doll me up!"

I assured her that we would protect her from mortuary beauticians.

"Have you thought of your pallbearers?" I asked, knowing that she wanted this cue.

"Oh! yes. There are the nephews—four of them, the two Jameses, Frederic, John. Then ask Stephen Algeo and Bill Cavanaugh, if he is out of service. Sometimes"—she paused as the pageant unfolded before her, "sometimes there are honorary pallbearers. I would like Mollie and Marie, Kate and Mrs. Mirwald. I can see it all now! And be sure to put

new stockings on me." She smiled contentedly as she watched in admiration the cortege of her own funeral move down the hushed main street of Cumberland, the small Wisconsin town where eventually she would be buried.

Presently I began rearranging books and flowers on the dresser. From her bed mother undertook to correct my housekeeping.

"Mother," I laughed, "you will always be a better housekeeper than I am. I may perhaps write better books but not keep a better home."

"Yes," she caught me up, "and if I had had your chance I could do much better than you do!" This valiant little woman never gave any of us an inch on which to stand.

That afternoon father and my two brothers came. During our visit, in a spell of physical weakness, mother asked,

"Do you think that I am dying?"

"No," we said, "but would you like to have us say some prayers?"

"Yes," she answered, and responded to all of them as well as any of us. Then she turned to my father.

"Did you hear what Sister said?" she asked.

"Yes, Lucy, I did."

"Will you keep these things always in mind?"

"I surely will."

"And will you always be firm in your faith?"

"I certainly will."

"I used to hope," she continued to my father, "that you might die first. I thought that perhaps I could help you. But as long as God has decided differently this way is best."

The next afternoon the five of us were together again and alone. Said mother,

"Do you think that I have failed in my duties to you as a wife and a mother?" Abashed, we answered,

"Surely not; we have often failed you, but you have never failed us."

"I have been severe with you at times," she said, "but it was because I loved you so much that I did not want you to do anything that might separate you from God. I think that I have always loved God, even before I knew how to love Him." Before this theology, this intuitive knowledge, this supernatural charity we had nothing to say. We had been taken beyond the areas or the needs of speech.

Days were passing. Our dear patient seemed in no immediate danger. The years had taught us something of her amazing recuperative powers. So I said cautiously, "Mother, don't you think it time that I get back to my work?"

"You have permission to be here," she protested.

"Yes, and I will stay if you think that I should. The boys have their work that they must attend to, and I have mine," I answered even more cautiously. She looked knowingly at the nurse.

"It is too bad that we didn't raise our children to be maids," she laughed, then quoted:

> "Duty points with outstretched fingers;
> Straight the path, austere and high.
> Woe betide the soul that lingers.
> Onward, upward is the cry!"

"You see, I have a lecture engagement in Saint Louis within the week. If I am to keep it I shall have to leave tomorrow. But if you wish, I can wire and cancel my appointment," I explained.

Came the quick challenge, "How much do you receive for these lectures?"

I named a very generous honorarium.

"Will that help you to save your soul?"—a second challenge.

"Yes, Mother," I said, stung to defense, "I think it will. I never speak without trying to do some good."

"Yes," she answered, "I believe you."

The next evening we said our last goodbye. Still sitting up in bed as I had found her a week before, pink-cheeked, eyes shining with unshed tears, smiling she sent me on my way.

" 'Duty points,' " she quoted,

" 'Onward, upward is the cry!' "

Four days later, a long-distance telephone message came. The brave bright candle of the life that was Lucy had burned out. Mother had answered her own momentous question,

"What shall I say when I see God?"

Mother's funeral, for which she had so happily instructed us, took place quite as she had wished, on a bright day in early May.

My father went back with my brothers to Duluth where he lived for the next five years in the lovely McCabe Home, under the care of the good Benedictine Sisters. For years the thought of possible separation after death had troubled him. It acted, I think, as the preventing grace for his becoming a Catholic some years before. Here, with a chapel just across from his room, he could go to Mass daily, say his rosary, and keep his promise to Lucy: always to be strong in his faith.

He loved growing old and hoped that he would live to be a hundred. We made much of his birthday after mother's death. September 10 was the day. With her picture enthroned on the table, the four of us had the annual party with candles, cake and presents. On the afternoon of the

last of these parties he and I had been walking in the orchard and garden for a pleasant hour. The ripening fruit, the laden branches pleased him. Again and again he would point out lovely colorings or beautiful groupings of crab apples. A bit tired, we sat quietly in the sun, neither of us saying anything. Then he asked me, half-puzzled, half-incredulous, "Where have you been, Lucy, all this time?" No question has ever told me so much. That instant of being his possible Lucy remains in my memory dear beyond a lifetime of being his actual daughter. In a moment, the illusion had passed. He did not try to explain.

Once more before God came for him I saw him. As I came into the room, the nurse said, "Mr. Wolff, your daughter, Sister Madeleva, is here to visit you. You remember her, don't you?" He took my busy hands in his quiet ones, looked earnestly into my face and said, "You must be she." He would make no second mistake. I could not be Lucy again.

His death was a sleep and an awakening. We put him beside her on another May morning, six years after her funeral. A simple granite stone, two markers and a blue spruce guard their graves.

XXX

Words, Words, Words

WHEN hardly thirteen, I was delegated by my father to deliver the Fourth of July declamation in the open-air "bowery" built for the big day. Nature was dilatory in giving me the five feet four inches of my present stature. On that Fourth of July I looked like a child of ten. A thirteen-page prose text had been given me to memorize. Father, being mayor of our metropolis, spoke officially. I had nothing to do but to obey. I may or may not have understood my speech at the time. At any rate, I repeated it over the Wisconsin air without aid of amplification or prompting. This was my debut in public speaking.

As children, we had been given to understand that English was our mother tongue. We were responsible for the correct intelligent use of it. Until 1925 I had no impressive opportunity to demonstrate this ability. That year I spoke to the faculty and students of the graduate department of English at Berkeley. After that followed words, words, words in many places on diverse subjects. One university publication announced that I would appear for a lecture wearing my native costume. The boys wore ties that day. During the flaming twenties I began a talk at a state university convocation with boys and girls in the most casual attitudes.

Before the end of the hour they had become attentive young men and women, in posture at least. The Mormons have asked me to talk in the Bishop's house at Salt Lake City, a privilege not often extended to Gentiles, I believe. Quakers have included me in their chapel programs. Mortimer Adler has been in some of my audiences, as I have been in his. The graduate English faculty at Columbia let me talk to them on "Frontiers of Poetry." Helen White was there that evening, and possibly Louise Pound, though I remember her better for her graduate course in Old English. She taught it like first-year Latin, and we learned it.

Through the years there have been innumerable lectures, papers and the like before conventions, confraternities, conferences of Christians and Jews. Recently I have been asked numerous times to talk to non-Catholic groups on meditation, contemplation. Our young people are immensely interested in insight and contemplative thought. They ask honestly how to get into the business of ways and means. I have tried to tell them that contemplation often begins with an earnest consideration of some accepted truth. We take the words apart: *Con-templation* becomes the act or state of being in a temple, perhaps a church, perhaps the out-of-doors, perhaps the mysteries of one's own mind. *Consideration* means being among the stars. Youth needs no more impelling invitation to companionship with God.

Returning by train from Seattle where I had been lecturing not so long ago, I rode for hours through the snow-covered majesty of the high Rockies. Suddenly at one great moment of my life on wheels, I looked out on a fire-scarred skeleton of a giant pine. As I watched, a bald eagle soared into view, moved slowly down, lighted and settled himself majestically on the outstretched arm of the pine. One mountain king in solitude providing a throne for another! In the speeding train I sat awed, wordless, their lone exalted subject.

Something of the making of books of prose has already found place in this chronicle. The volumes, *Chaucer's Nuns and Other Essays* and *Pearl: A Study in Spiritual Dryness*, both published in 1925, found acceptance in the scholarly world and opened doors to me where I find continued welcome. In 1941 I gathered together manuscripts of lectures and student convocations under the title, *Addressed to Youth*. Our princely Archbishop Cushing paid it the high compliment of saying that he had used every essay in at least one sermon. There are those who can find "sermons in stones, and good in every thing." Beyond these, I have a single prose volume, *A Lost Language and Other Essays*, which came out in 1951. Limits of time have fenced me in sternly. They have determined both the beginnings and ends of the making of books.

They have not prevented what looks to me now, reading the records

carefully kept by my long-suffering secretary, a very plethora of monographs, critical essays, articles appearing in magazines on both sides of the Atlantic. Picking names as subjects from among them, I am pleased to find Belloc, Charles Du Bos, Anatole France, Alice Meynell, Francis Thompson, Humbert Wolfe. Does anyone remember him now?

Henry Seidel Canby told me once, "Whatever you may do in critical writing, you will return eventually, I think, to poetry." So far as I have had time for any writing it has been verse. Mr. Canby foresaw the kind but not the conditions of my traffic with words.

Poetry I think of as a distillation requiring undistracted time in large quantities. This no sister that I know of has ever had. What one doesn't have one must make, naturally or supernaturally. The religious life is the model school in resourcefulness. Increasingly, after exchanging manuscript-verse with Father Charles O'Donnell and Joyce Kilmer, I found myself isolating thoughts, husbanding moments walking to and from class, holding every fraction of quiet for milling these thoughts into lyric form. The process has been continuous and almost more secret than my conscience.

Miss Conway often quoted to me the counsel of Saint Jean Baptist de La Salle, "A good work divulged before its time is half destroyed." The acorn keeps the secret of the oak, the bud of the blossom. Even the mother does not know the whole secret of the child within her womb. Nothing is more deadly to creative work than premature exposure. For years, even my closest friends did not dream that I wrote or cared to write anything more important than my letters home.

Meanwhile, I lived with the mental restlessness of wanting to write, the inner nauseas of the half-finished, the great releases of the completed poem. One lyric, one sonnet would be scarcely a week old before the creative process would begin all over again. Each poem might be the last and each clamored for a successor. The religious rule of silence was my best workshop. By virtue of its prevailing interior quiet I wrote at least one poem a month over a period of fifteen or twenty years, every one of which I sent out at once to earn its living by publication in some magazine. They were good children. They all sold themselves.

Apart from religious silence, illness was my second source of solitude. Subject to heavy bronchial colds, I found myself rather often isolated for two or three blessed days. Immediately, I can say intuitively, I set myself to work at something that I had been ruminating on for a long time, or perhaps something that just popped into my head. Both things can happen. All poets chew cuds. Caedmon, the first English poet whose name is known, was the first Ango-Saxon to confess it.

Recovery from my cold and a new poem were ordinarily synchronous.

Later on, my superiors and friends learned of my poetic therapeutics. They would warn me when trying to catch up on rest or vitality, "Now don't be writing poetry!" Honestly, I believe that endless suppression is much more exhausting than any form of writing of which I have experience. It adds up to this: Having never had time within an always heavy and demanding schedule to do any writing, I have done what I have done chiefly when ill, often in hospitals. On such a time the doctor came in to make the professional inquiry, "How do you feel?" "Fine, Doctor," I answered, "I have written a sonnet." Sonnets had neither temperature nor blood pressure for him. Nevertheless, he assumed interest. "Let's see it," he said. I handed him my sonnet, a good one, I believe, entitled "Details for My Burial."

In the course of thirty years I have published ten books of verse, big and little, most of which now appear in a single volume, *Collected Poems*. Sometimes students ask what books are best to read as helps to writing. With no hesitation at all, I say, "The Bible, the Oxford Dictionary, seed catalogues." This is spoken in parable. Here are the words of God, of man, of nature.

What preparation best enables one to be a poet? The Sixth Beatitude, I think, "Blessed are the clean of heart for they shall see God."

XXXI

Will You Walk into My Parlor?

MANY of my waking, working hours during the past twenty-five years have been spent in a double office on the sunny front of Le Mans Hall, a bit beyond the lobby and the great hall. Just inside the door, on the wall to your right hangs the first degree granted by the college. Entirely hand-drawn, hand-lettered, it witnesses to the conferring of the degree of Bachelor of Letters on Agnes Ewing Brown. This academic testimonial is dated June 16, 1898, and signed by Mother M. Annunciata, President of the Board of Trustees.

A wall of books greets you; mutual friends in alphabetical order: Mortimer Adler, Charles Du Bos, Christopher Fry, Romano Guardini, Conrad Hilton, C. S. Lewis, the Maritains, Mauriac, the Sheeds, Sorokin, the Trapps, Eugenio Zolli, former Chief Rabbi of Rome. Central on the shelves are various versions of the Scriptures, new and old; beside them, quite congruously, I think, my books of birds and wildflowers. The shelf below holds the Great Books, and below them, again in complete congruity, professional volumes on Women in Education, Womanpower,

and from the first slight text on fund raising by John Price Jones to the newest word with the printers' ink barely dry on it, a collection on the arts and crafts of financing education. Rare and lucky are the administrators who have not had to replace, temporarily at least, their communication of the liberal and fine arts with an apprenticeship in public relations, a communing with corporations, a treasure hunt in the mazes of American foundations.

Flanking these financial Baedekers are volumes of proceedings, directories, presidents' reports, corporation reports, files. Let us not linger unduly over them, though they contain treasures.

Yes, there are other walls to my office. A fine fresco of Mary Magdalen, done by our Sister Edna, and a good copy of Löchner's "Madonna of the Rose Garden" hang on one. Beside them sit I at my desk, hours at a time. A map of the world is under the glass top. Parts of my own world rest on it, not under glass, to be administered by my best wisdom, judgment, and experience, but in all ways, in inept though totally devoted apprenticeship to the Holy Spirit. Above me Pope Pius XII looks down from a large, beautiful, autographed photograph. A window frames our front campus. Our devoted Bishop Pursley in photograph smiles at His Holiness from the opposite side of the window.

Now come into the second half of my working world. This room we call humorously an old curiosity shop, a nutshell, a squirrel cage. It serves many purposes. It may be a curiosity shop, with unsuspected surprises for children; a nutshell (reminiscent of Francis Thompson) sheltering fertile ideas to be matured, lived with, shared, and ultimately fruitful and life-giving; a squirrel cage in which dreams, ideas, possibilities revolve in exhilarating succession for the mere fun and exercise of thinking or more seriously in hope of some future realization. This office has a north wall of bookshelves and a fireplace, a south wall of windows, an east wall of maps: London, Oxford, Paris, large, pictorial, exciting. We enter from a door at the west wall which has a frieze of warm sepia vertical prints from Chartres: the Christ of the South portal, a Queen of Juda from the west, the angel become sundial among them, and all from Etienne Houvet himself.

Follow the four-and-a-half feet of wainscoting around the room. Above it you will meet Giotto, Fra Angelico, Bonfigli, Forli, Botticelli, pages from the old French Romance of the Rose in excellent prints, and two rare icons.

The corners of the room are diverting. A medieval bellows leans beside the book shelf in one of them. It bears the incised inscription, "Amor vincit omnia." This is a nice supplement to the motto on the medal of Madame Eglantine, in Chaucer. Children like to blow little

puffs of air at one another through this antique device. Even better, they enjoy ringing all the bells on the bookshelves: the raucous cowbell from a Vermont farm, elephant bells from India, a slender bell from Viet-Nam. On the doorknob hangs the most melodious of all, a small, rough-cast camel's bell from Nazareth. A large hand-bell serves as door-stop. This is one of the few survivors of the generations of such bells that kept guard at the end of every corridor in the days before electric signals and sounded "the tintinnabulary summons" for all classes and assemblies. Only the very reliable students were delegated to ring these bells.

One window corner houses a family of canes and walking sticks, hiking sticks with nationalities and names of their own. Most of our friends enjoy meeting them: the blackthorn—Brother Thorn—from Ireland, Señor Stick from southernmost Mexico, a red birch Brother Stone from the Wasatch mountains. My favorite, a hawthorn, has a name which I will never tell to anyone. Even should you guess the name, I would not admit it. That is not a mental reservation. It is a part of the name, the only part that I share with you.

In the office of an administrator, such an array of sticks calls for an explanation. Many of us like to walk for the sheer joy of it. Some of us like to supplement human companionship with the kindly support of a stick. So we take our choice from the collection and start out on a quest: hepaticas, adder's tongues, fringed gentians in season. Or we try to catch in flight glimpses of migrating warblers, of the blue bunting, the towhee, the shyer, more fugitive of our bird friends. Sometimes we simply take the road "that leads to God knows where." You see, these hiking sticks have a pleasant life of it.

In autumn we ask Brother Fire to join us. We may build a small fire of dry leaves and sticks, invoke the spirit of fire, and with one match, have a merry blaze to watch and wonder at. The tragedy comes when we must get back to school. Then we have to beat Brother Fire to death and be certain he is safely buried before we leave his grave. All of this recaptures for us, so far as we can guess, some part of the spirit of everybody's Saint Francis.

A globe revolves upon my broad window sill. The world, you may think, is too much with me. Would you regard as quite ultra my wish for a sky map, too? A Buddha sits in contemplation on the small table in the adjoining corner. This came to me through the courtesy of some of General MacArthur's men when they were in Japan. The General had told them to watch for any vestige among the natives that they might find of Christianity surviving from the days of Saint Francis Xavier. This Buddha is the fruit of their mission accomplished. Ostensi-

bly, it is the conventional object of Oriental veneration. But the head can be lifted off. Within, one finds a small, perfectly carved figure which might well be the Good Shepherd, or perhaps Our Lady, standing against an aureole shaped like an olive leaf. This type of halo in some periods of Japanese art indicated divinity. So, through the courtesy of a great general and his loyal men, my office becomes a shrine to a hidden God. And who does not recognize that "the grace of God is in courtesy"?

As my mother told you long ago, my books are my friends. Here they are again, shelf upon shelf, the poets from Beowulf and Langland to Eliot and Millay and Daniel Berrigan on the left of the fireplace, the mystics on the right. Lead me not into digression or we shall never emerge from this room.

The fireplace is not so much an altar for burnt offerings as a shrine for the unforgotten and the unforgettable. A large oil portrait of Sister Rita is central in the wall above it. This was sent to us by the secretary of Elizabeth Jordan after Miss Jordan's death. It had hung in her office from the time of Sister's death and was painted from a passport picture, the only photograph Sister ever had taken, I am quite sure. In her day, kodaks were not ubiquitous and the camera had anything but the right of way.

A delicate bisque statue of Our Lady, an ancient ivory chalice, and a fine crucifix, enamel on copper, a gift of Clare Luce, share the mantel with Sister.

Chairs? Yes, there are two, upholstered in soft red velvet brocade, fit for an abbess or a prioress, in which I practically never sit. But many guests come to honor them. Four sturdy Windsor chairs serve workaday purposes and gather confreres around the table. Here many fascinating issues come to life, or are led to execution (an ambiguous statement; interpret it as you like!). You should know that under this glass table top a reproduction of a medieval almanac from an old copy of *L'Illustration* spreads out before us the months of the year, the signs of the zodiac, creation, the tree of life, Adam and Eve sharing their mortal repast, and the Nativity. Although we have been contemplating this triple panorama for years it preserves, like the very world it portrays, a perennial charm.

Many current problems in education Bishop Edwin O'Hara has brought to this table, he, however, properly seated in the crimson brocade chair. Years ago we spoke of the two absolute impediments to receiving Holy Communion: mortal sin and food and drink. I regretted that their innocent little breakfasts prevented thousands of children from going to Holy Communion as they assisted at daily Mass before school. His Excellency urged the matter of reverence. Happily, our Holy Father has established the perfect solution.

Father Vincent Donovan, O.P., has shared here our problems on the chanting of the Office and set our feet on the first steps toward improvement.

Before beginning his active crusade for Mary, Father Peyton came here with his great dream, the rosary recited in tens of thousands of American homes. We talked of ways and means. We had friends in Hollywood who proved helpful. Later, Father returned to my office with a greater dream, that of the air, the world of radio. Here I was helpless. "But I will send you to someone who can help you, Father," I said, and gave him the name, telephone number and address of Mr. William E. Cotter. Bill Cotter, one of Notre Dame's devoted sons, was at the time counsel for the Union Carbide Company in New York City. I wrote him and his wife Evarista, saying, "I am sending you a saint. Do whatever he asks you." Obediently, Bill took Father Peyton to the president of the Mutual Broadcasting Company. The nation-wide broadcast of the Joyful, Sorrowful, and Glorious hours resulted inevitably. Who can resist Father Peyton?

Some years ago we entertained Father Arrupe here, the Jesuit Doctor who stood with the Master of Novices on the hill outside the novitiate overlooking Hiroshima that morning in 1945 which most Americans, I believe, wish might be undone. Without knowing what had happened, the two priests found themselves face downward on the ground. Rising from their daze and prostration, they looked out to where the city had been, to see practical annihilation. Within the half hour people came running to the Doctor Jesuit for help, mouths bleeding, skin burned beyond healing, death overtaking them from no apparent cause.

In 1946, a young Jesuit, Father Eric Paul Hilsdale presented to Father Arrupe the chalice used at his first Mass and made by special permission from uranium, cobalt, silver, gold. It has been called the Atomic Chalice and was sent to Hiroshima in reparation and in petition that the elements contained in it would "never be profaned by man's hatred of man and exploded in the face of defenseless humanity." This is Father Hilsdale's prayer.

Other friends from the Orient share my nutshell, my office, my table. A fortnight ago our two Carmelite nuns from Madras, India, brought in jars of ginger, cloves, black pepper, allspice grown in their own native gardens. Two black ivory elephants, an ebony lion, lacquered boxes from Burma come from other Oriental sisters in our household.

Stalwart girls from Ghana, sensitive students from Uganda, youth from all the world walk into this parlor of mine, sometimes with parents and problems, always with the promise, with the possibilities of youth. To these I am completely captive.

You realize that these are just parts for the whole, the briefest briefs for "all God's chillun" who cross my threshold. You may have been among them more than once. If so, I remember.

This one beautiful group you must meet. A family of five came to leave the eldest daughter at our novitiate. As they said goodbye, the father stepped back to be last in leaving the room. Boyishly young in appearance, he said to me as only a father can, "Take care of her, Sister." What a valedictory!

This has been a long detour to my inner office. I have not meant to tire you. My invitation to walk into my parlor is sincere. That is a day without salt, indeed, that does not bring the ends of the earth together in this small world of mine. Someday it may bring you.

XXXII

An Old Lady Shows Her Medals

SINCE I was six years old I have been in school all my life. From my nineteenth year, I have lived under the same roof with high school and college girls: teaching them, breaking bread with them, playing with them, praying with them. They are a goodly company of little sisters. Many of them, I am sure, had not, when I knew them, lost their baptismal innocence. Most of them at all times were, I pray God, in the state of sanctifying grace. You see how skyscraping an experience would have been that of taking off our bodies and sitting in our souls.

I have had great teachers. Mother Pauline, as president of Saint Mary's College, first put me in graduate school at the University of Notre Dame where I earned my Master's degree in 1918. Sister Celsus, my superior in Ogden, and Mother Barbara in Woodland, California, saw to it that I completed my work for my doctorate at the University of California. Mother Vincentia, our superior general, sent me to Europe with a focus on Oxford in 1933 and 1934.

Elizabeth Havican entered Saint Mary's College in 1911. In 1918 I dressed her in the Holy Habit. As Mother Rose Elizabeth, our superior general, she believed in me, bore patiently with me for twelve years. In 1937 I asked that Sister Kathryn Marie, a teacher at Holy Cross Academy, Washington, be transferred from her eastern province to Saint Mary's as our dean of women. The request was granted. In turn dean, superior, Midwestern provincial, Mother Kathryn Marie, now our superior general, forbears while I explain to her all the reasons for letting me do what I wish.

At the end of fifty active years, spent on many missions in a large community, I think back, look back with gratitude and love on all my sisters, so patient in bearing with me, so generous in helping me, so kind in forgetting my failures. Enumeration being impossible, I include you all in this my grateful memento for the living.

Great teachers have been matched with great friends. Always they have come into my life when I have most needed them. Last year I traveled through the West with a young sister. One bishop, one priest after another we met whom I had known as little boys. Explaining the informality of our conversation, I would say to Sister, "I knew him when he was in knee pants." Commenting on our trip after our return, I asked her if I had worn her out. "Not quite," she said, "but I have yet to meet a bishop whom I knew in knee pants."

Looking back over the years on mission and at Saint Mary's, I find them set against a background of crimson and purple, black and white. The Church speaks a dignified language. Your Eminence, Your Excellency lift us up to the splendor of our family and its care for us. Cardinal Stritch, now with God, is more than ever our patron. Cardinal Spellman we claim as an honorary alumnus. Bishop Pursley meets our every need, distinguishes our world in his kindly solicitude. "Father" is the basic word for them all. I have known, cherished, been directed by their goodness, wisdom, holiness. God has sent these friends to me, or me to them in the needs which only they could meet. They are a part of the "divine assistance" for which we ask earnestly at the end of every meal. Occasionally, when something particularly desirable had taken place, our superior used to say, "How did that happen?" "We ask for the divine assistance every day, Mother," I would answer, "and we get it."

Sixteen years ago a beautiful, gifted young English girl came to New York at the invitation of the International Federation of Catholic Alumnae. A wire from Marion McCandless, our alumnae secretary attending the meeting, urged me to invite this remarkable Barbara Ward to Saint Mary's. She came, talked amazingly to us, stayed overnight with us. Last spring she came back, though in memory we had never let her leave us. Now as Lady Barbara Jackson, former editor of the *Economist*, visiting professor at Harvard, she returns to us, her Saint Mary's family, as to the home of her spirit, to a world that loves her deeply.

For the commencement commemorating our centenary we invited Clare Boothe Luce to be our speaker. From piles of invitations, she asked Bishop Sheen which to accept. "Go to Sister Madeleva," he said. She came for that first magical visit to us. Her name is a brightness, a light so right for her. "Clare" and "Luce" are both words for the luminous elation which to me is so much herself. Mr. Luce came, too, last June at

Notre Dame's conferring of the Laetare Medal on her. As we sat in the guest dining room, eating raisin toast with tea before their flight back to New York, we knew, in their essence, the fine amenities of friendship. Recently, Louisa Jenkins has joined them. What a meeting of great minds!

More than once in years past Sir Arnold Lunn has landed literally on our threshold in an almost nonstop flight from Chile. A day or a fortnight here always meant groups of students in heated controversy with this past master in debate.

The visits of Jacques Maritain, his wife Raïssa, her sister Vera have brought with them the tranquillity of order proper to our best-loved philosopher, the palpable peace of our dear, near-saint. Charles De Koninck in his biennial sojourns at Saint Mary's challenges our mentalities, our philosophic training for every bit of all that they are worth.

Helen Iswolsky came to us to complete her second book on Russia, *Light Before Dusk*. Jean Charlot built himself into our world in fifteen great frescoes representing the fine arts in Moreau Hall. The Trapp family have been our house guests more than once to sing not only their unique concerts but Mass and Benediction as well. Baroness Elizabeth Guttenberg has brought us her heroic apostolate and a share in the mystery of Theresa Neumann, her close friend.

Year after year, with intervals of interruption, Robert Speaight comes to us as a guest-professor. He brings the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins, T. S. Eliot, the contemporary poetic drama of Christopher Fry, the great Belloc and, more than all, Shakespeare. His productions with student casts of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Twelfth Night* will continue to be major achievements in the life of the college. Through Mr. Speaight, Martin Browne and his wife have revived at Saint Mary's the great half-forgotten text of the old York cycle mystery plays from the Creation to General Judgment.

In a staff of well over a hundred teachers, more than half are excellent lay faculty members, each bringing to the college his or her own capacities to dream for it, to work toward the realization of their dreams. I have in mind the Moreau Quartet, our debating team which ranks seventh among forty-seven national teams, and which won from the Army, the second-best team in the country this year. I have in mind the designs of Norman Laliberte, rated among the best designers in America. I have in mind our upper division Christian Culture course, resting on Christopher Dawson's theory of philosophy of education and directed by Dr. Bruno Schlesinger. But why enumerate? I have in mind every member of the faculty who according to the fullness of preparation and generosity of

spirit is building Saint Mary's into a college worthy of its past, prophetic of its future. I have in mind the great corporations that are making history of their benefactions to our private colleges: the Ford Foundation, United States Steel, Esso, Sears and Roebuck and their companions. How many of us wear the Maecenas medals for them? Within our own state of Indiana, companionships established by our Conference on Higher Education and our Conference of Church-related Colleges are dear to me personally and invaluable professionally. The Lilly Foundation has given us memorable incentive and help. Mr. Pattillo's interpretations of these have been experiences in gracious encouragement for which we are grateful.

I leave the campus for the moment. Because of their absolute generosity and kindness to me, I call the Lahey Clinic and Dr. John Norcross my medal of Hippocrates. They have made life physically very worth living.

I have a group of Holy Innocents medals that I want to show you: the children who play with the trinkets in my office, who ring all my many bells, the little boys who carry off my hiking sticks, the little girls who want to try on my cap. Then come the boys and girls who write to me during Book Month or when preparing their long composition about some living author, or when taking my name in confirmation. Every one of these letters I answer personally. For twenty years one such correspondence has lasted—with Geraldine Madeleva Strouse. One specimen letter from another Holy Innocent must stand for all:

> Dear Sr. Mary Madeleva,
>
> In our literature class last week we juniors had to draw a famous writer's name from one of the freshmen's green and white uniform hats that was floating around that day. I was lucky. I drew your lovely name which is very much cherished here at Saint Gertrude's. I think it suits your very attractive and overly friendly face which I studied when I looked up your well-spent life in the only books which should be honored to have your poem on the pages. Namely The Scholastic and the Catholic Authors Books.
>
> I am writing to ask if you would mind very much to give me in 400 words incidents or happenings in your life which are not in these books. You see we have to have 2,000 words in by Decembr 22, and I have gotten 1,600, which is good considering that you are still living.
>
> Hoping this won't inconvenience you,
>
> Sincerely,
> Barbara Kelly

I like to tell our students that they are not complete Saint Mary's women until they are graduated, alumnae; until then they are only in the process.

In 1950 I asked Marion McCandless to write a history of the alumnae. In April, 1952, *Family Portraits* was off the press, a compendium of my college family. Most of them are acquainted with me or I with them only on paper. But in the expansiveness of the Saint Mary's life and the Holy Cross spirit we all love one another. For half my life Marion has been a composite of our Saint Mary's world. In putting her last among my best friends, my Saint Mary's medals, I am including every Saint Mary's girl whose name she knows, or does not know—if any there be. I am including her most of all. I am putting my arms figuratively around Marion in an attempt to expand my capacities for love and loyalty, somehow to approximate hers.

One rotund Hoosier medal I prize for President Herman G. Wells who bravely invited me into the alumnae family of our state university.

Two medals in one I have kept for all but last: the Laetare and the Lady of the Holy Sepulcher. Irene Dunne wears both of them. In May she came with her friend and our alumna, Nurma Waite Huesman, to give our commencement address and to receive our Honorary Degree in Letters. Speaking on "A Lamp at the Door" she lighted the way to all great womanhood through the shining example of her own.

As you have already noticed, no chronological order has been imposed upon this display. Nor would I know how to achieve such order. A certain congruity is all that I can pretend to. By virtue of that I show these last very special medals. Some years ago one of our students asked me to walk out on the campus with her. A few days earlier I had helped her with a letter of application to a Carmelite novitiate. So to begin conversation, I asked,

"Alberta, what do you think is the most important thing in the world?"

Without a breath of hesitation and with absolute conviction, she replied, "Sister, I think love is."

She was the last girl in the college to romanticize on anything. As we continued our walk, I asked again, "How do you pray?"

At this, she stopped for a bit, then answered, "By conversation mostly now, I think."

This I submit as one of the great experiences of my life. Alberta is my Carmelite medal.

Within the past few years I have had the privilege of reading in manuscript the poems and plays of Sister Francis, P.C., and of assisting in some small way the writing of this very gifted young nun. She is my Poor Clare medal.

A decade ago one of our graduates in classics entered our graduate School of Sacred Theology. Four years later, as a Doctor of Philosophy, she became a member of our college faculty in the department of Theology. Today she is a professed cloistered Dominican in the Monastery of Our Lady of Grace, North Guilford, Connecticut. As Sister Mary of God, she is our beloved Holy Cross medal of Saint Dominic.

Two names are met here under the aegis of the Order of Preachers and the contemplative life: Father Raymond Bruckberger and Father Louis (Thomas Merton). Father Bruckberger, long a friend through the printed page, has come to us happily this year as a guest and a personal friend. We have shared his rare and penetrating insights into the infinite drama of sanctity and the cast of humanity playing each an indispensable role in that drama.

Among the first students in our School of Sacred Theology was a young woman directed to Saint Mary's by the (then) Dom Verner Moore. She became most interested in Father Louis (Thomas Merton) whose poems I had given her. Of her own initiative she wrote to Father Louis at the Trappist Monastery, Gethsemani, asking him for an explanation of contemplation. His generous answer came in manuscript, entitled "What Is Contemplation?" with permission to publish it at Saint Mary's if we wished. So through the great and simple charity of Father Louis and his superior we have had the privilege of publishing the first prose essay of what has become an elite library of Trappist spirituality.

These are my medals. I show them proudly. There are others. These I speak of gratefully and humbly in recognition of the generous groups who chose me as recipient: The Poet's Corner Award, the National Poetry Award of the New York World's Fair, the Siena Medal, the Woman of Achievement Award.

Having saved the very best for the last, let me register myself a grateful, happy honorary alumna of Mount Mary College, Manhattan College, the University of Notre Dame, Manhattanville College of the Sacred Heart, the University of Indiana. The old lady has showed her medals.

XXXIII

Have I Forgotten Anything?

HAVE I forgotten anything? Through the fallibilities of memory, most probably I have. But, in intention and in the very depths of being, I have not. Nothing that has entered into or touched these seventy years

of my lived life has been unrecorded. My present self contains the complete archives, with nothing omitted or deleted. Caring for all, cherishing every contributing factor to a total self, I must bear witness to memory, must acquit my debts with a "thank you" for every contribution.

They include gracious days with Margaret Anglin, quick-charged hours, hours on tiptoe, I thought, with Judith Anderson at Saint Mary's, an afternoon at his California home with Robinson Jeffers, the kindliness of Leo McCarey in the West and at home, the treasure hunt with Ketti Frings and her sister at Saint Mary's. How can I recapture our day as hostess to Sigrid Undset in Chicago, the somber undercurrents in all her profound speech with its typical Nordic falling inflections, her sense of the ominous pervading even the ovation of her truly American welcome. We invited her to come to Saint Mary's to be an author in residence for the duration of war. The peace of our world, however, took her too far from the Atlantic seaboard where her contacts with her children in Europe were more immediate.

Bruce Marshall must have a paragraph of his own, whether as guest at Saint Mary's, at our Paris convent home on Rue de Vaugirard or at his home with his lovely wife and daughter. Although this Josephine has now grown to womanhood, I still cherish her as the dear bilingual baby that I knew.

How shall I commit Evelyn Waugh and his wife to the limits of a paragraph? Fortunately, memory transcends the strictures of words, preserving for us the companionship of dinner and a rare evening together. I like to remember the roll call of the absent Waugh children that, for all its British detachment, brought these thriving sons and daughters into our Saint Mary's family circle.

Sir Shane Leslie, sometime in kilts, but always in a multitude of irrepressible and unpredictable capacities, is not one but many memories. These every student who knew him in his scholarly lectures or in his facetious moments will not forget.

In the middle thirties, members of the faculty of Saint Mary's and Notre Dame gravitated to a center of mutual interests—the writing of verse. They called themselves the Holy Rood Poetry Society, met once a month at Saint Mary's, submitting at each meeting unsigned copies of such original work as they wished to go through the clinic of criticism and to run the gantlet of the devil's advocate. Norbert Engels often filled this office with the humor and efficiency that dealt death to doggerel. Louis and Lucille Hasley, John Nims, Henry Rago, Rufus Rauch, Robert Speaight still constitute a solid core of poets and appraisers of poetry among us.

Neither our faculty nor I have forgotten our series of conferences by

the scholarly Praemonstratensian, Father Gabriel, on medieval education and the philosopher, Joseph Pieper, on the intellectual virtues. An afternoon that Dom Virgil Michael, O.S.B., and Mortimer Adler spent with us in the early days of the Great Books program is a poignant memory. As we disbanded, we watched the two young philosophers walk down the hall like two splendid boys. They were scarcely older than that. Two weeks later Father Virgil had gone to God.

Out of our friendship with Mr. Adler and Scott Buchanan came an invitation to lecture to the students at Saint John's College, Annapolis. There were my talk and a longer discussion after the talk and hours on the terrace at the home of President Stringfellow Barr, trying to find our way through the four last things. Immortality can be almost as endless in discussion as in reality. Do you remember, Dr. Barr?

Other audiences of college boys I recall. Chief among them are the graduates at Saint John's College, Minnesota, and at Saint Mary's College, California, to whom I had the privilege of giving commencement addresses.

The Seventy-fifth Anniversary of Manhattan College brought me to that campus for an unforgettable commencement. On the stage with the officers of administration were Cardinal Farley, Father Robert Gannon, S.J., Alexis Carrel. Father Gannon was the brilliant, witty chronicler for the Christian Brothers as Christian educators in repartee with the Sons of Saint Ignatius in the same role. To those of us present, the experience was one of unforgettable intellectual delectation.

In 1957 another equally memorable son of Saint Ignatius brought his gifts of wisdom and wit to Saint Mary's College for our commencement, Father Joseph Christie of Farm Street, London. Early in that scholastic year he had directed the exercises of the annual retreat for the students, preparing the seniors, at least, for the sequel of graduation.

No, I have not forgotten our hours of driving north to the very dubious trickle of water in the wilderness, the source of the Mississippi river, or our hours of driving over difficult roads in a difficult car, across miles of one of the many mouths of the Mississippi to New Orleans. I have not forgotten weeks at Land-O'Lakes, our frightening a fawn from its protective-colored nest and my helpless anxiety for this little Bambi and its mother. I have not forgotten our trips to Georgian Bay, down the Saint Lawrence and up the Saguenay, our weeks at Stratford, Ontario, for the Shakespearean Festival, and our good friends, Tom Flood and Tom Patterson.

The hearts and homes that you have opened to me at Hartsdale, Beekman Place, New York, Golden Beach, Miami, Joliet, Fort Wayne, Tulsa, Laramie, Los Angeles, San Diego: these I have not forgotten.

There are those who remembered with me books planned together, books collaborated on, galley proofs read and manuscripts mended. Maurice Lavanoux recalls with me that he gave his first lecture at Saint Mary's. *Spirit* and *Jubilee* have given me place in their planning. Mr. E. I. Watkin may remember his manuscript still with me and my wild-flower books in England with him. Anne Fremantle and Alice Curtayne are still with us in the charm of memory. Never shall I forget the midnight during Christmas holiday when our good stewardess, Sister Adela, came to my door apologizing, "I am sorry to wake you, but the fifth floor is on fire." Someone had left an electric iron on. By four in the morning, the fire was out, the water mopped up, all roofs still over our heads, the firemen regaled with coffee and doughnuts; all except the fire chief. He did not break his fast. He was going to Holy Communion in the morning. How happily our present dispensation would have served him that strenuous night.

I am by no means forgetting the education of Sister Madeleva, my induction into fund-raising by the John Price Jones Company, first by Mr. Jones himself, now in process under the direction of Charlie Anger and his henchmen, Bob Johnston and Peter Wolkodoff. Apropos of this business of financing education in one's own college, who that attended can forget the Saint Patrick's day brunch in Oakland where I spoke to two hundred Christians and Jews, each with a sprig of fresh shamrock flown in from Ireland that morning!

I have a board of trustees, bounded only by the United States; a generous President's Council, inspired by Lincoln Sollitt and never to be forgotten by me.

Saint Mary's and I have our providentially built-in relationship, our big brother family bond with the University of Notre Dame, never more generously realized than in its esteemed superior general, Father O'Toole, its always available procurator, Father Heston (a native son of South Bend), its kindly provincial, Father Mehling, and its priestly teacher-president, everybody's Father Hesburgh.

In virtue of belonging to this Holy Cross family I found myself standing in line with university and corporation presidents in the lobby of the administration building of the University of Notre Dame one September morning in 1952, shaking hands with President-to-be Eisenhower and "Mamie" on their brief visit to South Bend. By the same token we greeted Vice-President Nixon and his wife some years later.

The University has brought to our world the genius of our great Mestrovich and his devoted wife and children. Their families are now our families as well.

Why is it so easy to expect one's friends to understand? Because I

could not call the roll of all, I have not mentioned many of you by name. But I have kept this last best place for you. Because you are friends, you do understand. You do take your place, each of you, in these my seventy years. I know that you have not forgotten. You must believe that I remember with gratitude and love.

XXXIV

The Relaxed Grasp

BEFORE I was in the novitiate four months the only sister who had counseled me in any way regarding the religious life was sent on mission. I never saw her again. Sister Rita, my dream lady, died just a month before I left the novitiate. I never had a day's opportunity of knowing her simply as a sister-friend. By these two tokens and even then I understood that God meant me to live without props. He was making my natural independence an asset rather than an obstacle. My friendships rested on mutual interests, enthusiasms, objective. I had to do my own thinking, make my own decisions, with proper deference to others. This gives one a capacity to be alone. Sometimes it almost imposes aloneness on one. There are compensations.

When I was a very young sister I came upon an essay by Louise Imogene Guiney, entitled "La Sainte Indifférente." I found just what I needed and at the exact moment of my need. Let me quote the paragraphs which have dominated my life, this description of the saint of holy indifference:

> "Of all his store, unconsciously increased, he can always part with sixteen-seventeenths, by way of concessions to his individuality, and think the subtraction so much concealing marble chipped from the heroic figure of himself. . . .
>
> "He has gone through volition, and come out at the other side of it; everything with him is a specific act: he has no habits.
>
> "Nothing is so vulgar as close suction. He will never tighten his fingers on loaned opportunity; he is a gentleman, the hero of the habitually relaxed grasp."

When I left Saint Mary's, my school and convent home for thirteen years, I loosed my hold on friends, pupils, places, things. I went to a world of missionary possibilities, of compensatory rich friendships, of the majesty of the mountains, a new world of birds and wildflowers. It was a life one spent on tiptoe, at least for me.

Three years later it was exchanged for California spring in February, a world rose-filled in April, and exotic summers until the winter rains. Then I watched the orange and other citrus fruits hanging heavy on the trees bleach rather than ripen. The Pacific gave itself to me down all the miles of its matchless coast. The trees, from pepper to redwood, were mine, the purple finches, the mockingbirds.

Better, there were the colleges that I knew, some before they were born, some in their robust youth, all in their beautiful promise and fulfillment. I think of Dominican College of San Rafael, which I knew when its enrollment numbered five students, two of whom were sisters. I was studying with the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur when they pulled themselves up by the roots in San Jose and moved to Belmont. This was a major lesson in the relaxed grasp. I spoke to the first students at Mount Saint Mary's College, Los Angeles, when I had to step on a box to enter the only accessible door of the first building then under construction. I remember watching the fog roll over twin peaks in San Francisco long before the College of San Francisco transfigured that great eminence. Best of all, new worlds of the mind and of the soul opened in California, with new friends to stimulate and to share them. These, too, must teach me the relaxed grasp. These, too, I left to return to the work of building a college on a mountainside. Of this I have already spoken.

I did not mention that living among the mountains involves mountain climbing. This calls for hiking sticks. When I left Saint Mary-of-the-Wasatch I had in my office a collection of hand-picked, carved and polished hiking sticks that had journeyed miles with me to the tops of all our surrounding mountains and back. They had shared our quest of wildflowers: fritillary, lupine, lungwort, pentstemon, cliff rose, columbine. They had shared with us the first call of the meadow lark, the iridescence of the lazuli bunting, the splendor of the western oriole. They were friends to leave behind.

On returning to Saint Mary's after fifteen years I did not have enough to fill one small trunk. This is at least an outward sign of the emancipation achieved by the relaxed grasp.

For twenty-five years I have occupied an outer and an inner office in Le Mans Hall at Saint Mary's. Either could be mistaken for an old curiosity shop. A half-dozen or more hiking sticks make a curious collection in the corner of the inner office. Some day I may put them as a holocaust on the roaring fire in our Great Hall, a perfect burnt offering. But not yet!

When, before dawn, on August 15 of last year, God came for Bill Cotter, the realization left me bereaved as no other death could have.

The relaxed grasp—how could I translate it into comfort for Evarista, his sweetheart-wife, my schoolmate-friend? When a fortnight later Helen Holland Voll died, my grasp relaxed on a second of my lifetime and most dear friends. On Thanksgiving Day the astounding word came that John O'Laughlin, after a day in his office working in apparent health, had died before all of his family could reach him. I began to understand that God was taking me in earnest. He loves these friends of mine even better than I do. I am learning to let go in deference to Him.

A little Chinese sister came to study with us some time ago. She had seen her family shattered, her young religious community dispersed. Her entire world, materially, consisted of two small suitcases, filled with absolutely essential clothing. She understood little English and spoke less. During our annual retreat which she was trying to make with us I thought to help her by talking over with her slowly and simply the matter of each conference. After the instruction on poverty, I asked, "Sister, did you understand Father's talk?" "He talk on poverty," she answered; then added, "Sister, you come to my room." We went upstairs together. She opened her suitcases, put their entire contents out on the bed, everything, I believe, except her toothbrush and soap. "Now, Sister," she said, "you take what I do not need." Here was an Oriental girl of twenty-five, a refugee, alone in every possible way, understanding and practicing as I had never had to do the absolutes of detachment, of holy poverty. What had my years taught me of the relaxed grasp?

I am, however, en route. I like to go to Marshall Field's in Chicago just to see how many things there are in the world that I do not want. There have been, still are, books that I should like at least to try to write, cuds of song upon which I still hope to chew. I should like to watch my seedling oaks and beeches grow into great trees. Thinking of things to be done, hopes to be realized, persons to be helped, I say laughingly that I go to a multitude of funerals daily, burying so many deceased projects, so much of what I have had to let die and must bury without regret. Some day I shall have only One, Infinite, Absolute want. I shall not even want, for the time being, my body. I shall not even want the breath I breathe. When the last nonessentials of encumbering humanity have been cut away, when the last tenacious grasp has been relaxed, what shall I say? What shall I say when I see God?

CHARLES C. O'CONNELL

The Vanishing Island

An Irish Entertainment

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CHAPTER

1

The Vanishing Island

THEY say that Innishios sinks a little deeper into the sea every year. Several explanations are proffered to account for this phenomenon but the legendary one is perhaps as convincing as the scientific. The old people see in the vanishing island an hour-glass that measures the life of the world. When the sea finally claims it, they say, eternity will claim us all and the world will be no more. In spite of this dire prophecy the ten people who lived on the island seemed content enough and rarely bothered to check the high-water line to see how much nearer they were to the day of doom.

From my vantage point the island rarely appears the same. Seated at the desk of my study I can see right across the two-mile Sound that separates the island from the mainland, and without having to shift my head, Innishios is always framed in the centre of the window. At low water its bulk is really impressive, a wedge of land darkly outlined against the sea, but when the tide is full it looks like green flotsam floating on the waves. In the evening, when the sun sinks low behind it, the land is lost in a dazzling aura of light, and seems, in fact, to have really vanished.

The island is inclined from north to south over its mile-long length. On the north shore you look down from a forty-foot cliff, and on the other end the land shelves so gradually into the sea that one could wade a hundred yards from the shore and still find the water barely knee-deep. The few houses of the only village are built along the eastern shore facing the mainland. From my window they look like sheets drying on a sagging clothes line.

Only one house is built on the high part of the island: a grey, two-

storied building, standing starkly on a slight dome of land almost on the cliff edge and rearing a stiff windowless back to the northern winds. The place was my father's, and is now mine, and it was here that David Cartwright came to write his famous book. I met him on the first day he arrived, and even then, when I had no way of foreseeing how fateful his arrival was to be for our little community, I considered our meeting a momentous one. I was buying stamps in the post office when he leaned a shoulder against the door and looked in. . . . He was a youngish man, bareheaded, and carried his jacket slung over one shoulder. He had a few days' stubble on his lean jaws and his hair was a bit windblown, nevertheless he made a singularly striking picture framed against the sunshine outside. The strong column of his neck rose from an open-necked shirt, and a signet ring glittered on the third finger of his right hand. He took in the entire post office in a quiet easy scrutiny, from Miss O'Dea's pinched face looking askance behind the bars of her cage, to the assorted boots, pots, lamps and brushes that hung from the ceiling. Finally his gaze rested on me.

"Could you let me have a little information, please?" His voice was deep and his accent undefinable. I had met many men who had travelled widely and who spoke as he did. Neither by word nor intonation could they be associated with any country. They were citizens of the world. "I am anxious to contact Mr. O'Riain." His eyes wandered from me to the postmistress, including her in the question.

"I'm O'Riain," I told him, "and I suppose you are Mr. Cartwright?"

"Yes," he said simply, extending his hand. The coincidence of our meeting did not seem to surprise him. "I'm glad I was expected." His palm was dry and his grip firm.

"The house is ready for you," I said, "but perhaps you may want to stay on the mainland until to-morrow. I could easily put you up. We could go over first thing to-morrow morning."

He eased his shoulder from the door jamb. "If it's all the same to you, Mr. O'Riain, I'd like to get over there right away."

I went out with him into the sunlight. "As you wish, I'll take you over. But perhaps a meal or maybe a drink——?"

"No, thanks all the same." He swung his jacket from his shoulder. "I had a meal a few hours ago. I'm rather anxious to get started." He jerked his head towards the little pier. "I drove here in a taxi from Dunfoy station. The driver put my luggage down there. I thought it the logical place."

I could not understand his hurry, but I didn't question him.

"Well, if you are determined to go, we can cross over right away. The boat is just here."

There was not much luggage, considering I had rented him the house for a year; two large suitcases, a smaller one, and a portable typewriter. A light mackintosh was thrown over them.

He helped me place the luggage in the boat, and sat in the bows with the easy confidence of one accustomed to small craft. He kept his eyes on the island as I started the outboard engine and drew away from the pier.

"Not a bad hunk of land out there," he remarked. "Rather low-lying, particularly to the south."

"It is," I agreed, "but it's not as low as it looks from here."

"All the same, I bet the southern half is nearly awash in a southwester."

"Pretty near," I told him. "The land is no good for five hundred yards inshore on the south side, and the rest is only poor grazing. The people are dry enough on the eastern side, though. It's sheltered there."

"Nice-looking place," he said after a while. "I like it already. I suppose it's difficult to communicate with the mainland in bad weather."

We were well clear of the short promontory now and the wind was beginning to catch us. I had to shout to be heard.

"They've been cut off once or twice but never long enough to create a serious situation. It would have to be really bad to prevent the boats getting in. We simply run them ashore on the southern side."

He nodded his head, and made some remark that I was unable to catch, and we did not speak again until I nosed the boat against the concrete pier fronting the village. He stepped ashore and tied the painter for me and lifted out the luggage I passed to him.

"You needn't bother to come ashore," he said to me then. "I've inconvenienced you enough. Anybody will show me the way to the house."

His anxiety to be rid of me nettled me somewhat. "As your prospective landlord I have certain responsibilities towards you. Besides, we must tell your housekeeper of your arrival. If you don't mind, I prefer to see you settled in myself. I'd be easier in my mind. After all, renting a place by correspondence is rather like buying a pig in a bag."

He shrugged. "As you wish, but it's not necessary. I don't want to cause any excitement or confusion."

"You won't," I told him, as I scrambled on to the pier.

In this, of course, as I well knew, I was wrong. Already a knot of people had approached the pier and were looking at us with the guileless curiosity of an island people whose sole highway is the sea. I knew all of them: Dan O'Leary with his two sons Jackeen and Oweneen; Frankie Casey and his wife Molly and their three small daughters; Polly Cavanagh, bowed down with the weight of over eighty years; and, I was happy to

note, Katie Farrington, who had elected to cook and housekeep for our new tenant. I introduced her to Mr. Cartwright.

Katie had buried two husbands, but looked none the worse for it. She was young-looking for her forty-odd years, and her raven hair was as black as when she was a little girl. She offered a shy hand to Cartwright, but she spoke to me.

"I lit all the fires yesterday to air the place, and the range is going since this morning. There's no food in the house, though. To-morrow I had in mind for Mr. Cartwright's coming."

"There's no need to bother now," said Cartwright, obviously embarrassed by the attention of the islanders. "I won't need anything to eat until to-morrow."

"Glory be to God, boy," said the shocked Katie, "d'ye want to die on our hands? You must have something against the night, and there's your breakfast to be thinking of to-morrow morning. 'Tis no trouble at all to bring the food up to the house. It's all ready, except the eggs—I want them to be fresh for you."

Katie had been reared in the tradition that a man's sole interest is food, and perhaps something in her outraged expression dissuaded Cartwright from giving her an argument in this instance. He shrugged his shoulders and stooped for his luggage. Here he was forestalled by Dan O'Leary. The big lobster man interposed himself between the baggage and the outstretched hand and removed his short pipe from his mouth long enough to say:

"Leave the bags be, Mr. Cartwright. Me two sons Jackeen and Oweneen are big and ugly enough to help you with the baggage." He caught my eye and ran the stem of his pipe through his moustache. "You don't be worryin' about him at all, Cathal. Divil a bit of harm will come to him with all of us watching him."

Before Cartwright realised what had happened, Dan's two sons, who were not very big and certainly not ugly, had possessed themselves of his luggage and were heading for the road. The newcomer looked at me, a protest in his eyes. He opened his mouth and shut it again. The swear-word he used was barely audible to me.

"I'll see you settled in," I told him, taking him by the elbow. "We made the house as comfortable as we could."

"I'm sure you have," he said politely.

"Are you goin' up with him?" quizzed Dan O'Leary, and when I nodded: "Sure there's no need, if there's hurry on you, I could—"

"I'm in no hurry," I interrupted him a little warmly. There seemed to be a conspiracy to get rid of me.

"I'll step up the road a piece with you then," said Dan, unperturbed.

Just then Polly Cavanagh came towards us, pushing her way through the group with the prerogative of venerable years. Time had turned her skin to wrinkled parchment and her eyes were red-rimmed from turf smoke, yet there was always a certain nobility about her that was almost regal. Her black shawl was fastened at her neck with a big cameo brooch. She rested her hands on the arm of my tenant.

"You're coming as a stranger but you'll prove a true friend," she said. "'Tis often I've seen you in my dreams. The very same—" She drew in her breath sharply when she saw his ring. "'Tis the very same—a bright band of gold. Just as I saw you. There will be confusion of the waves and the winds and great excitement, but you won't be the cause of it. You're welcome among us, my son, and God will bless your work."

Strangely enough, although the old woman's words must have been as unintelligible to him as they were to us, he showed neither surprise nor resentment. As we moved away he thanked her for her welcome.

The house he had rented from me was half a mile from the village and on the highest part of the island. I had lived there several years after my father's death, but I never liked it. It was dry enough, though it stood in the teeth of the winds, but I always felt lonely there. I had some misgivings now about installing this young man in the grey bulk of it. However he seemed genuinely pleased with what he saw when we ushered him inside. The kitchen stove was lighting and the fire in the living-room was slacked down with turf mould. Upstairs the bedroom was bright with sunlight from the open window. He was intrigued by the view. From here the rugged mainland seemed close enough to throw a stone at it, and the sea creaming among the rocks made an undulating line of white at the base of the cliffs.

"It's better than I had hoped for," he said. "Indeed, it is as near perfect as it can be."

"You're seeing it at its best," I had to tell him. "To-day is a pet day. The weather can get really bad out here. When the wind blows from the north you'll swear the house is full of banshees."

"That won't bother me. I have my work to do." Although I was curious, I did not ask him the nature of his work, but the portable typewriter had given me a clue. Through the window I saw Katie Farrington arriving with a full basket.

"You're in safe hands anyway with Katie Farrington around," I said.

Before we left him to Katie I told him that if ever he needed either me or the boat he could tell Dan O'Leary.

"I may take you up on the boat idea," he said, "but I don't think I'll need anything else." He smiled suddenly, and it made an agreeable change. For the first time I warmed towards him. "If you feel inclined

to worry about me, please don't. I assure you I can take care of myself." He shook hands warmly and went indoors.

Dan O'Leary and his two sons and myself went down to the pier together.

Though Dan puffed solidly at his pipe I knew he was itching with curiosity.

"Strange kind of a fellow entirely," he said. "Sounds like one of the gentry long ago. Isn't it funny now he comin' out here to live in your house? I suppose 'tis a bit of fishin' he'll have in mind, or maybe this bird watchin'? He'll be like that gomoge of an Englishman who was here last year."

"I think this man is English, too," I said.

Dan removed his pipe to spit on the road. "You don't say! Then I'm sure 'tis the bird watchin' he'll be at. A great people for bird watchin', the English. They're a funny race altogether."

He came with me as far as the pier.

"D'ye mind what old Polly said about him," he said, as I got into the boat.

"I wouldn't take too much notice of what she says, Dan. She's getting very old now."

"All the same there's somethin' in it. I've known Polly man and boy, and she have the gift of second sight like her mother before her."

"In any case there wasn't much to what she said about him."

Dan combed his moustache with the stem of his pipe. "'Confusion of the waves and the winds,' she said, 'and great excitement.' We'll keep a weather eye on that lad. If he's important enough to get into Polly's dream he must be a real remarkable man. A man worth watchin' however."

I couldn't get Dan's last sentence out of my mind as I steered the boat across the Sound.

CHAPTER 2

I DID not see Cartwright for a week after, and during that time he never came to the mainland, although Dan O'Leary and his sons could have put him ashore every day. It was from Dan that I learned how my young tenant was faring. Apparently he was well on the way to becoming

a recluse. He had not come down to the village since he went to the island, and on the few occasions that Dan had gone to him the younger man made no secret of the fact that entertaining guests was not to his liking.

"If you ask me," said Dan, when I met him towards the end of the week, "I'd say that boy is slightly touched in the head. Katie tells me that 'tis little enough he eats. He keeps poundin' away on that machine of his as if his life depended on it. Sometimes, she says, he don't even know she's there. No matter how early she comes in the morning he's up and working before her, surrounded by more crumpled paper than you'd see in a month's walk. When she starts cleaning the place up she has to stick the brush between his legs and under his chair—but do he give a sign that he knows she's there? Divil a bit! One time she touched some papers he had on his table—you know how Katie is about tidyin' up— Well, man alive, he nearly went through the roof! He warned her about doin' it again and told her in the name of all the saints—and that's puttin' it mildly, savin' your presence and not to offend your ears —not to be fussin' around." Dan spat on the pier and brushed his sleeve over his moustache. "He's got Katie so that she don't know if she's comin' or goin'. She says her nerves are all of a jitter, and you know what she is when her nerves get that way. One of these fine days our friend is going to have a saucepan smashed over his head. I'll say this much for Katie, she knows how to handle men."

I found this vaguely disturbing. Katie Farrington's temper, though difficult to rouse, was formidable.

"Worst of it is," continued Dan, "she cooks all sorts of dainty stuff for him and she says a bird would pick what he eats. That's not what hurts Katie, though; divil a word he says about her food or her cookin'; he just picks at it while he reads a book stuck up agin the jug. Katie says that if she gave him a plate of seaweed he'd be none the wiser. I tell you, Cathal, Katie is crackin' up. She's not used to such treatment. You know about her two husbands—she might have trained them well and maybe talked them to death, but they certainly didn't die of under-nourishment. The two of them made fine corpses."

He stepped into the boat where Jackeen and Oweneen were waiting for him among the lobster pots. "If I were you I'd have a word with our friend before Katie splits him."

I did nothing about Cartwright that day, but the following morning I steered over to the island and went on up to his house. His housekeeper was not there, but I found my tenant in the kitchen typing at the table. Crumpled paper formed a ring around his chair like big white flower petals, and the table itself was littered with books and typescript. He did

not hear me come in so I knocked loudly on the door. He looked up at once, and his exasperated expression softened somewhat when he saw me. He pulled a hand hard over his face and moved his head from side to side as though to relax tensed muscles.

"God bless the work," I gave him.

"Very little to bless," he returned. "There's very little done." He made a vague gesture towards the paper on the floor, all abortive efforts at thought translation.

I sat down uninvited and began to fill my pipe.

"Maybe you're trying too hard. Sometimes it's just a case of not seeing the wood for the trees." He looked at me sharply, but I continued to pack my pipe. "I didn't tell you before, but I write a little myself, and I understand how you feel."

"I know your work," he said, suddenly. "I think I've read everything you've written."

I was genuinely surprised and, not unnaturally, gratified. "Well, that makes us kin, if you like. I don't know what you are working on. If it's a novel——"

"It's not," he said briefly.

"Well, then, I may not be able to help you so much. But perhaps my experience with creative work might be of some assistance. I've often worked on a very promising story, writing like fury under the impetus of kindly inspiration, then suddenly—puff!—the story goes dead, the characters hang in mid-air, as it were, listless and unconvincing, and you spend despairing hours staring at a blank page." He did not say anything as I lighted my pipe, but kept turning a long pencil over and over in his lean fingers.

"My own cure for literary dryness," I continued, "is a holiday; fishing, walking, hunting, shooting—anything except writing. Inspiration is a capricious old lady and she keeps her bag shut up tightly as long as she feels you want it, but once you lose interest in her she opens it again. It's only a question of waiting."

He stared at me thoughtfully for a moment, and I noticed that the stubble he had when he arrived was developing into a light beard.

"You may be right," he said, at length. "But you see I know exactly what I want to say." He tapped his temple with his finger. "It's all up here—crystal clear. So clear, indeed, that sometimes I feel I could set it down on paper in a single day. Yet immediately I put a sheet in that machine something funny happens. Words get in the way—the whole fabric of what I want to say gets messed up with mere words." He shook his head. "It's hard to explain, and you may not know what I mean."

"I think I do," I told him. "You see your idea as a whole, a complete entity, and you are impatient because you can't pen a thought as easily as you can think it. It takes time and method to break an idea up into words, and it is difficult to see what you are building through the scaffolding of the mere mechanics of writing. Does that sound like your trouble?"

"Something like that," he admitted.

I came to my feet. "I believe you're rushing at this thing—whatever it is you are writing. Break your idea up into sections and tackle each painstakingly until the whole structure is complete. No matter how clearly you see it, you see it only as an architect sees a building in his mind's eye. But you must lay stone upon stone, or word on word if you like, and that takes time. I suggest you take a holiday. Your idea will germinate in the meantime." I paused at the door. "You're still a young man, you can afford to wait."

He had listened to me with his eyes averted, and even when he spoke he did not look at me. "I can afford to wait, I agree, but I have a strange feeling about this work of mine. I am unable to explain that either. It seems that I can't repress an urge to finish this as quickly as I can." He looked at me suddenly. "Youth is no guarantee of longevity."

I felt suddenly uneasy as I met his grey eyes. "Have you any reason to suspect you won't live as long as anybody else?"

"No," he said slowly. "A few years ago my expectancy of life was nil. I saw men die on all sides of me, and most of them were just boys." He looked away from me again out through the window that gave over the grey sea. "This premonition I have, has, I feel, nothing to do with death. But whatever the reason, the sense of urgency remains with me." He smiled suddenly. "But maybe I will take it a little easier, and believe me I am grateful for your advice."

"Good," I said, "then you can come fishing with me this evening. The mackerel are breaking north of the point over."

He hesitated a moment, looked uncertainly at the typewriter, and then threw his pencil on the table.

"All right," he said. "Maybe a day out will clear the fog a little bit."

"You can be sure of it," I told him.

And so that evening we went fishing.

The manner and regularity of the mackerel break off the promontory every year is to me one of the wonders of the world. Around the second week of August the tiny fry muster in millions off the northern arm of the bay, herded from over hundreds of square miles of sea by the blue-grey mackerel. The tiny fish clutter so thickly that they turn the sea to

silver, fluttering pathetically, despatching divisions and contingents in aimless manoeuvres, like a panic-stricken army.

When the first attack begins, the sea literally boils and the steel-blue torpedoes dart among their helpless victims, jaws gaping, cramming the fry down their gullets by sheer momentum. The battle might well last for days or weeks, each attack punctuated by an uneasy interlude in which the unfortunate victims move blindly from place to place.

I delight in killing mackerel. I feel that I am championing the weak and defenceless. Every fish on my hook is one less to prey on the smaller brothers. Perhaps it is an acute sense of justice makes me feel like that, seeing that the mackerel is so big and strong and the fry so tiny. So I kill as many as I can.

Like all bullies, the mackerel is not clever. He is so gluttonous that he rarely takes time out to see exactly what he is rushing at. His avarice transforms even the most make-shift bait into an edible morsel; a piece of tinsel wrapped on a hook is an infallible lure; or a lifeless sprat impaled on a hook, but the deadliest of all is the simple spinner, a piece of shaped metal, painted red on one side, that rotates as it is moved through the water. This they cannot resist, and they become aware of the three barbed hooks at the end only when it is too late.

The evening I went fishing with David Cartwright I was trolling with no less than six of these spinners. They trailed behind the boat at strategic lengths. By the time we had reached the point, I had so perverted the mind of the young man against mackerel in general that he was ready to slay them with his own hands, and kept looking eagerly towards the turbulent water which marked the scene of battle. A desperate struggle was going on when we reached the point. I stopped the engine to view the situation. All about us tiny silver pencils were fleeing for their lives, but the maelstrom was located about a hundred yards out off the point. I headed for that, shipping the engine and putting out the oars and leaving Cartwright to tend the lines. Silently we descended on the scene of battle, and there in the evening sunshine we wrought havoc in the ranks of the marauders.

Our strategy was deadly. Occasionally we made a sweep out to sea beyond the fringe of the break only to troll into the heart of the mêlée again. By sunset we were but one boat of a score, and the mackerel were moving away from the coast. Nevertheless our deadly work went on until the lighted lamps of the cabins winked at us from the mainland. Finally, as dusk deepened around us, we tired of the slaughter, and by that time the bottom of the boat was covered with fish.

Cartwright and I viewed each other over the carnage. The whole personality of my tenant had changed. His hair was tousled, and fish

scales glistened on his sweater and trousers. He looked extremely young. I do not believe we had consciously exchanged a single word since we reached the break, but I was aware of a comradeship with this man which was difficult to explain. We stared at each other with a strange solemnity, the fish between us, and the broad sweep of the darkening sea on all sides; then suddenly we burst out laughing. It gave me an odd pleasure to see that serious face relax in laughter.

"Glad you came fishing?" I asked him.

He brushed the sleeve of his sweater over his eyes. "I haven't enjoyed myself so much in years." He touched the fish with his toe.

"What are we going to do with these?"

"Bring them back to the island. Old Polly enjoys a fresh mackerel."

"But we've enough for an army."

"Dan O'Leary and his sons will account for some, and so will Frankie Casey and his clan, to say nothing of Katie. Then Miss O'Dea back in the post office will take some, and there's Father Daly and his curate, and maybe the Rev. Mr. Johnson at Dunfoy." I looked at him speculatively. "Maybe you might be trying one yourself!"

"They're a bit oily," he said doubtfully.

"Katie Farrington has a way with them."

"I might take one of them or so when we get back."

I turned the engine overboard and started it. The island was a vague shadow in the universal greyness about a mile away to the south, and on the other side of the Sound the lights of the mainland looked out at us like fallen stars. It was only when I put about and opened the throttle that I noticed the weather had worsened somewhat. A stiff southerly breeze was beginning to ruffle up the sea, spilling it over on us in a fine spray. Cartwright slithered over the fish to where I stood at the tiller.

"Drier back here."

I gave him an oilskin coat and he slung it cloak-fashion over his shoulders.

"We came further north than I thought," he remarked.

"The excitement of the fray," I told him, and he laughed.

"We certainly smote them hip and thigh."

The darkness descended on us as we entered the Sound, and the sea was beginning to pile up on all sides. A swinging light off the starboard bow marked the island pier, and I steered for that. Ten minutes later Dan O'Leary, bearing a lantern, tied up our painter and we stamped ashore.

"I'm thinkin' 'tis going to blow to-night," he said. "The bottom is fallin' out o' the glass. 'Tis fine of ye to bring me the mackerel. I couldn't

go out myself, and wouldn't in any case, seein' that ye were at it." He dropped into the tossing boat and began to help himself.

"Don't forget the others," I reminded him as he began to toss the fish on to the pier.

He did not look up. "They'll be down themselves, you'll see."

Sure enough, as he spoke, Frankie Casey appeared out of the darkness. The coldest day in winter Frankie would only wear a waistcoat.

"I was watchin' you through the glass and you at the slaughter."

"There's some there for you if Dan has left you any."

"What would I be doin' with them?" said Dan. "There's plenty for all, and we'll leave ye a few for your own self, Cathal."

"Kind of you," I told him.

Just then Polly Cavanagh joined us, only her face and the white cameo brooch distinguishing her from the night. She brushed past Frankie Casey and fastened her hand on my forearm. It seemed that I could feel the ice of her finger through the material of my sleeve.

"You brought him back to us?"

I guessed whom she meant immediately.

"He's here," I said, "safe and sound."

She peered past me to where Cartwright stood, but she did not go to him.

"The wind is rising, Cathal." Her voice was trembling. "The beginning of my dream is here. God's will be done! I wouldn't tarry here for long. You have your own life to live. I didn't see you in my dream."

Sure enough the wind was tugging at us strongly now, but I noticed it only subconsciously. There was a hidden meaning in the old woman's words, and I had it in my mind to question her when Dan O'Leary spoke:

"You'd better be goin', Cathal. Unless ye want to bide the night. That sea is beginnin' to lep."

I had a brief word with Cartwright before I left.

"We'll go fishing again another day."

"We will, indeed," he returned, "and I'll remember your advice about the writing."

"It won't do any harm anyway," I said.

Dan O'Leary threw off the painter and pushed me away from the pier.

"I'll be over to see you towards the end of the week," he promised. "If I can get afloat."

He could not have known at that moment, nor could I, that we were never to see each other again on top of this world.

CHAPTER

3

I REACHED the mainland in the small hours, soaked through and standing in a foot of water, to find a knot of people on the pier. I was missed, and they were anxious. A fine kindly spirit binds people who live on the sea. . . . Miss O'Dea, carrying a lantern, shook me by the hand. In the light from her lamp the rain gleamed on her face, and her hair made rats' tails against her lean cheeks.

"I thought I'd be without my mackerel. 'Twas the fish was worrying me." The wind carried the hood of her mackintosh from her head, and her hair streamed out. " 'Tis going to be a bad night."

Her prediction proved correct. It was a bad night, and it remained bad for many a long day and night after that. It was a freak storm which hit us. For two whole days it blew with relentless fury from the southwest, driving a hard slanting rain before it and lifting the sea in the Sound. On the third day the wind backed gradually and blew from the northwest. The roar of wind and sea were our persistent companion now, and after a while it seemed that it had always been like this and we had never known a fine day. On Sunday, a week after the rain had started, the weather cleared, and though the wind dropped a bit, the glass was still low. I tapped it optimistically that morning, but contrary to expectations the needle swung even lower. That evening the wind started again, hurtling out of the darkness, and with it came the rain. I remember sitting at my desk as night fell, looking out at the island, which was veiled behind a torrential downpour, and worrying about David Cartwright. Conditions on the island could not be comfortable now, and for somebody unaccustomed to the rigours of an islander's life there could be grave danger to limb and lung on that wedge of saturated land. I took that worry to bed with me.

I awoke some time later to find the house groaning under the pressure of a hurricane wind, with torrential rain making repeated violent attacks on the window. The darkness was filled with sound, and it seemed as I sat up in bed that I could feel the whole building tremble. I live on the crest of a slight rise outside the village, and had often been buffeted by storms, but there seemed to be a particularly malicious quality in the note of the wind to-night that made me more than a little apprehensive. I got out of bed with the idea of lighting the lamp, but as my foot touched the floor the straining windows burst open and the gale swept

in, bringing with it the streaming rain and the terrifying roar of the sea. Blindly I groped my way over to the windows and re-fastened the leaves. The baffled wind moaned fiendishly through the cracks.

I lighted the lamp and set it on the dressing table. In the few seconds that the window had been open the wind had done unbelievable damage. My four pictures had been swept off the wall. A small table beneath the window had been upset, no doubt by the flying curtains, and a patch of water reached over towards the bed. The blankets and sheets were damp. Under the circumstances sleep was unthinkable, so I dressed and went downstairs, tying the catch of the window with a bootlace before I went. The clock in my study showed 4:30 A.M.

The fire was almost out, but I was thankful to see a red glow when I poked it. I placed a few timber blocks on the embers and made a cup of tea on my oil stove. All this time the wind boomed in the chimney and pressed against the windows. I sipped my tea at the desk and watched the rain flatten itself against the darkened glass. I could not rid my mind of anxiety for the safety of David Cartwright. I visualised him up in that old stone house on the high part of the island with all hell breaking loose around him. I was suddenly assailed by a burning desire to catch a glimpse of the island and foolishly brushed my hand against the glass to peer out. That simple action of mine was destined to be fraught with significance, for as I leaned across the desk to peer out I saw, or thought I saw, a vivid red streak of light move across the centre pane, and vanish.

I had never seen anything like it before, but since the night itself was unique, I was prepared to believe in blood-red lightning.

Dawn brought no relief, and in the late morning I donned oilskins and went down to the village. A fog of driving rain filled the Sound and I could not see the island at all. In the local I found many of my neighbours, each sharing my anxiety for the safety of the islanders. Small Jimmy John, who was our oldest inhabitant, was heating rheumy hands to the fire. His scared face was as white as his beard.

"I was just tellin' 'em, Cathal," he said when I came in, "I've lived many a long day and seed many sights, but I never seed the likes o' this. When the lightnin' turns red 'tis time for us all to make our peace and prepare for judgement. 'As lightnin' comes out o' the east and appears even on the west so shall His comin' be.' "

"Jimmy says he saw red lightning last night," said Clancy the publican, drawing me a drink. "Went right into the island or out of it, he says." I knew by the way the publican spoke that he did not believe the story.

I brought my drink over to Small Jimmy John.

"They're laughin' at me," said the old fellow, "and maybe some people

think 'tis a grand thing they're doin' when they laugh and make mock o' the weak and aged, but I saw what I saw."

"You did so, Jimmy," I said, raising my voice so that all could hear. "And I'll tell you the time you saw it. After half-past four this morning. As long after that time as it would take to make a cup of tea."

Jimmy's fingers groped at my arm, and his eyes gleamed. "You saw it too, then! God be praised!" He made a swift motion with his hand. "A flash of red lightnin'?"

"The very same," I said. "I saw it, no mistake about that."

Jimmy John turned to the assembly. "Ye'll believe me now." He glanced at me: "Just over the island you saw it?"

I nodded. "As I sit at my desk the island always shows through the centre pane of the window. It was there I saw the lightning."

Small Jimmy John looked at the fire. "'Tis the end of the world, I'm tellin' ye, and when the storm lifts ye'll see for yerselves that the island is gone."

Although I never believed the legend, I felt a cold shiver at the spine. I noticed also with satisfaction that Clancy was no longer smiling.

Old Jimmy John's prophecy about the island proved incorrect. The rain stopped that evening, but we had to wait two days before the wind dropped. I spent all the morning of that third day watching the island through the glasses. I do not know what I expected to see, but my binoculars were not powerful enough to show anything in great detail beyond the oddly disturbing fact that nowhere on the island was there a sign of life.

The four houses facing the mainland looked intact, as did the one on the high part of the island. But for a people who had been virtually isolated for two weeks their inactivity was ominous.

I went down to the post office at noon, to find Miss O'Dea full of foreboding.

"Seán Malone was here. Himself and the sergeant are thinking of pulling across to the island."

I was not surprised. This seemed to confirm my fears.

"Is there something wrong with them over there?"

"They're not sure, but Sergeant Mulcahy and a few others were watching the island since morning, and they say there's not a soul to be seen on it."

"I was looking at it myself," I told her. "But maybe after the storm they're sleeping late. Nobody out there would have closed an eye for days."

"The very thing I told Seán," she said.

I put my head outside the door. "I think I'll go down to the barracks and tell the sergeant I'll put him across in my own boat."

"I'd do that," said Miss O'Dea. "They had a mind to ask you, anyway."

I found the sergeant and Seán Malone in the barracks. These two represented the law from here to Dunfoy, and for both there was little enough to do. Seán was a young fair-haired lad and, as I well knew, a good chess player. He was apt on occasions to chaff against the frustrating law-abidingness of our community. The sergeant, on the other hand, was due for retirement soon and had seen enough of unrest in his youth. His hair was prematurely grey and he kept it closely cropped. His lean face did not look very bright, but he was astute enough.

"If the two of you are for the island," I said, "I think we can chance it."

The sergeant buckled his belt and reached for his cap. "I was on my way up to you. If you'll take me across I'd be obliged. I don't feel right about the island, somehow. Seán will take care of things here now that we have a power boat."

It was nearly two o'clock when the sergeant and myself put out. There was still a high sea running, but the rollers were coming in unbroken undulations. We had a bad time in the little boat, and Mulcahy was kept busy baling out. Now and again he made matters worse by insisting on squatting in the bows to examine the island through his glasses. The two of us were soaked before we reached the island. I was not surprised to find the pier deserted, although I knew that coming across we would be in full view of any watchers from the island, and could expect the usual deputation to meet us. It seemed that I had known all along that something was seriously amiss with Innishios.

The swell made the business of negotiating the pier a little difficult. I stood off the shore for a little while and cut the motor to take stock of the situation. Nothing moved on the island, and in the uncanny silence the cries of the wheeling seagulls were frighteningly forlorn. The four houses stared at us vacantly.

Mulcahy put down his glasses, and his expression reflected my own anxiety.

"Something wrong here, Cathal. Do you notice anything about the roofs of the two first cottages?"

Even without glasses I could see that a concave arch had appeared in each thatch roof as if a great weight had pressed down on them.

"Do you notice, too, that although the light is strong behind us the windows are as black as coal?"

I had noticed the peculiar vacancy of the windows.

"I bet you there's not a pane of glass or a sound rafter left on the

island," said Mulcahy. "I'm afraid of what we're going to find here."

I started the engine again and nosed towards the pier. We had great difficulty in getting alongside, and when we finally managed it, we had to let the boat drift on two long painters to avoid damage to her sides.

The two of us took stock of our surroundings. I cannot explain the eerie sensation I experienced as I looked towards the houses. It was as though I had come upon a plague-stricken village.

"Let's go up," said Mulcahy, unconsciously speaking in a whisper as though we were in a churchyard. His hatchet face was grim and the muscles bunched on his lean jaw.

Four houses in all made up the village, each typical of the district: squat whitewashed buildings with three small windows in a row and a door overshadowed by the thatch. All the doors faced the mainland and each house stood in its own patch of ground. The first of them was owned by Dan O'Leary. The bit of ground which fronted this was never cultivated, and usually it was a repository for lobster pots, cork floats, tarred ropes, and the rest of the assorted paraphernalia of the lobsterer. Right now the patch of green was swept clean. Not even a scrap of paper remained, and the army of nettles that besieged the south gable were beaten flat. The door stood open and not a pane of glass remained in the windows. A square yard of thatch had been ripped off the roof near the chimney, exposing the lattice work beneath. A long strip of seaweed fastened somehow to the thatch waved in the wind. Mulcahy looked at this speculatively before going inside.

Within was a scene of indescribable destruction. The earthen floor had been torn up as by a crazy plough. A heavy deal table lay smashed in the fireplace, and pictures, lamps, and a weird assortment of twisted things were scattered over the floor. The canvas ceiling had been ripped from the rafters overhead, and remnants of it lay everywhere. The partition which had once divided the small bedroom from the kitchen had disintegrated in rubble, and the two beds were twisted scrap. Incredibly a single picture nailed in one of the corners remained intact. It was a photograph of Dan's father staring with wide shocked eyes at the destruction around him.

CHAPTER

4

IN SILENCE we went out and moved along to the next house, where Frankie Casey had lived. The same destruction prevailed here. A longboat he kept in the garden was wedged between the gable and a small outhouse he used as a workshop. The sides of the boat has been stove in. To our relief there was no sign of either Frankie or his family.

Katie Farrington's cottage was less damaged than the other two, but the front door hung on but one hinge. The partition in her house still stood, though the few chairs and a big table were all piled in a heap under the window. The floor under our feet was wet.

The last house, where Polly Cavanagh had spent her eighty years, stood on high ground in the lee of a shelf of rock, and beyond a smashed window it was undamaged. In the kitchen the table was laid for a meal and a cold teapot stood beside a burnt-out fire. In the single bedroom the clothes still lay untidily on the bed and there was a deep impression in the pillow where her head had lain. Of Polly herself there was no sign. Even her clothes had vanished. All that remained of her personal belongings was the white cameo brooch which lay on a chair beside the bed.

Mulcahy picked it up and turned it over in his hand.

"No reason why Polly shouldn't be here. The sea didn't reach this far."

"No reason," I had to admit. "Unless, of course, she thought there was a possibility it would." I felt suddenly full of hope. "All of them for that matter would have sought safety on the highest point of the island. I'd wager Casey and Polly and the rest of them are up with David Cartwright right now."

"I was thinking the same thing," said Mulcahy, "but I can't understand why they didn't meet us."

"Probably sleeping it off," I suggested, as we went outside. "Judging by what we've seen they must have been through a fearful ordeal."

The sergeant nodded. "Anyway we'll go up and see your tenant."

Somehow, as we walked towards the big house the elation I felt at the idea of the entire community finding sanctuary with David Cartwright died. The house, staring down on us, had a bleak air of abandonment. Great dark patches appeared on the roof. Mulcahy never took his eyes off it.

"It would be quite a sea to envelop the whole island," he said, once.

The possibility of the entire island being under water at one time had occurred to me, but the condition of Polly's cottage disproved that theory. I reminded Mulcahy of this, but he made no comment.

A few hundred yards from the house he stopped suddenly. Off the road to the left the heather and shrubbery had been scorched for a wide area. The black circular patch about a hundred paces in diameter was strikingly vivid against the green of the slope.

"I never remember seeing that before."

"Nor I," I admitted. "It certainly wasn't there when I was here last."

"And it has been raining heavily ever since then."

"Well, more or less." I suddenly thought of the red lightning. "This place may have been struck by a thunderbolt." It was a mere guess on my part, since I had never seen anything that had been struck by lightning.

"If it was intentionally blazed as a signal," mused Mulcahy, "somebody would surely have seen it on the mainland."

"It's quite possible."

The sergeant rubbed his chin ruefully. "Your theory about the thunderbolt may be right, though."

We moved up to the house, which at first glance appeared to have weathered the storm exceedingly well, but as we approached, the dark patches I had noticed on the roof resolved into gaping holes through which the lattice framework showed white as bones. All the windows appeared to be intact and—a most heartening omen—a thin spiral of smoke arose from one of the chimneys. At that moment my confidence of finding everybody safe returned.

"The fools we are," I said to Mulcahy. "It's a damn unfunny joke they're playing on us, frightening us like that."

In spite of the appalling damage to the roof I was so convinced that my island friends were unharmed within that as I went inside, I shouted: "Come on out of it, O'Leary, you bloody rogue!" Nor was I apprehensive when my voice echoed hollowly through the house. Indeed, in the kitchen, in spite of the sodden plasterboard ceiling, we found evidence supporting my hopeful theory. A half-dozen mattresses were piled in a corner, and bundles of blankets were placed untidily on top of them. The table was surrounded by more chairs than the house ever had, and Polly's old shawl was draped over the back of one of them. I sat on the corner of the table, slightly lightheaded with relief. I was more convinced than ever that we were the victims of a bad joke.

"When they're tired of playing the fool they'll show themselves," said I to Mulcahy. "They should have more sense at their age."

The sergeant was looking around, his hawk face still tense.

"I hardly think that Polly Cavanagh would enter into the spirit of a game of hide-and-seek."

His voice chilled me a little as I reached for my pipe.

"Something tells me," said Mulcahy, advancing to the fire and sitting on one of the chairs, "that all is not well."

My apprehension was returning with every word he uttered. I felt suddenly annoyed with him.

"Well they *were* here," I explained rather heatedly. "That's Polly's shawl, and those mattresses and chairs were collected from the houses below. And it's perfectly safe to assume that the sea never reached here, though the rain certainly came through the roof."

"I agree," said Mulcahy, "but where are the people?"

"Upstairs, playing some damn silly joke," I said, getting hotter. I left the table and stamped to the door.

"O'Leary—Casey!" I called. "For God's sake don't be doing the fool!" I was so angry I did not hear the latch of the back door lift. "Come on down out of there!"

"Save your breath," said a tired voice behind me. "Nobody's here but we three."

I spun round to find David Cartwright framed in the rear doorway.

He wore a sweater and a pair of flannel trousers, and he seemed to have aged ten years since I last saw him. As we watched him he brushed his hair from his eyes and placed the shovel he carried against the outside wall before closing the door. He staggered rather than walked to the fire, and sat in a chair opposite Mulcahy.

The sergeant jerked to his feet.

"Do you keep any whiskey in the house?"

Cartwright indicated the dresser vaguely.

Mulcahy found the bottle at once and splashed some of the spirit into a cup. He brought the bottle back with him and stood it on the table.

"Drink this, Cartwright. You look as if you need it."

My tenant drained the cup in a gulp, and grimaced.

"Thanks!" he said. "That was thoughtful of you."

"I think I'll take one myself," said the sergeant, and did not wait to be invited. He looked at me, but I shook my head. A sense of unreality possessed me, and I felt like one beholding a scene in a dream.

Mulcahy used the same cup as Cartwright, but he was leisurely about it. He held the china cup in his hand as he sat down.

"Take it easy a while," he said to Cartwright. "Shovelling can be hard work when you're not used to it."

"It was," said my tenant tonelessly, staring at the grey ashes of the

dying fire. "I didn't mind the work, I've dug fox holes before now, but this is the first time I've buried anybody in one."

Mulcahy did not seem surprised or shocked, nor for that matter did I. To me, we three still seemed to be as intangible as dream characters.

"A bad business at any time," said Mulcahy, conversationally. "Who was it you buried?"

Cartwright leaned forward in his chair and clasped his hands between his knees.

"Polly Cavanagh. She died two days ago. I don't know much about first aid or medicine. I did what I could. It wasn't much. She died like a child going to sleep. She asked me to bury her on the highest part of the island." He unclasped his hands and dug one fist into the palm of the other. "I didn't have a coffin or a box long enough to hold her. I just wrapped her body in a few blankets. I laid the earth very gently on top of her."

"Had you nobody to help you?" Mulcahy sipped his whiskey. His tone was gently sympathetic.

Cartwright leaned back and threw an arm over the backrest of his chair.

"No."

"What of Dan O'Leary and Casey and the others?" I blurted out. "They must have been here with you."

My tenant drew his thumb and index finger over his eyes to pinch the bridge of his nose.

"They were."

"Are they on the island?"

"No."

Mulcahy drained his cup and placed it on the stove.

"That's damn good whiskey. Do you know where the others are?"

Cartwright shook his head.

"Are they dead?"

"I don't know that either. At this moment I'm not sure of anything."

Mulcahy leaned over and patted his knee.

"We won't bother you so for a while. But you won't mind if we look around for them?"

Cartwright shrugged.

"You may if you want to, but you'll be only wasting your time. They're not in the house nor anywhere else on the island for that matter."

The sergeant came to his feet. "We'll take your word for it, so. I suppose you have good grounds for saying that!"

"I have," said Cartwright.

"Come on so," said Mulcahy, taking me by the elbow. "We'll go back and let this lad get some sleep."

A thought struck me as we reached the door, and I turned around. "How was Katie when you last saw her?"

Cartwright smiled wryly. "In tears. She wanted to go with the others, and at the same time she wanted to stay here. She was a lovely woman." His voice was very tired.

I had a mind to press more questions upon him, but Mulcahy pulled me away.

Half-way down to the pier the paralysing sense of unreality began to drop from me.

"Surely," said I to Mulcahy, "you're not going to let the matter drop like that?"

He looked at me with mild interest.

"No point in questioning a man half dead with exhaustion. Besides he's here any time we want him."

"All the same, he might not be telling the truth about the others—about they not being on the island, I mean."

Mulcahy stopped and faced me.

"Do you think he's lying?"

His eyes nonplussed me.

"No," I had to admit.

"Neither do I," said Mulcahy. "I've had a creepy feeling ever since I came on the island. All the same, I'd have a look around if I were you."

I stared at him in surprise. "What will you do?"

"Cross over in the boat and bring a few more to help you. Not that I think we'll find anything contrary to what he has told us, but just for a double check and for the official record."

When he had gone I headed west across the island and circled back towards the house. Near a pinnacle of rock overlooking the sea I found a mound of freshly-dug earth. A few seagulls rose from it as I approached. I stood looking down at it for a moment and then approached the house from the rear. My thoughts were all jumbled and anything but lucid, but the image of Cartwright had attained a sinister significance in my mind.

I walked to the rear of the house and circled it on tiptoe. I did not particularly care if Cartwright saw me, and when I came out front I boldly entered the open doorway. In the kitchen I found my tenant fast asleep on one of the mattresses. Sleep had assuaged the tense lines from his face, but his eyes were deeply shadowed. There was something childlike in his attitude that was strangely reassuring. I covered him with a blanket and went upstairs. All the rooms were virtually open to the

sky and were empty, except for the bedroom which looked on to the mainland. There were neither blankets nor mattresses on the bed, and a few pots and dishes were stacked on the floor.

I went downstairs and looked in again at Cartwright. Both hands were visible, and I noticed that the big signet ring was missing. It was so insignificant a point that I wondered afterwards why I noticed it. I left him asleep and went down to the pier. Already I could see that Mulcahy was returning, and I lit a pipe while I waited for them.

He had brought Seán Malone with him and two others.

"Find anything?" he asked, as he stepped ashore.

"I found Polly's grave," I told him. "I doubt if you'll find anybody else. Cartwright is asleep."

We scoured the island until dusk. I am unable to say what the sergeant found in the way of clues, but of the island's former inhabitants we found no sign, nor did we ever see any of them again.

CHAPTER 5

THE DISAPPEARANCE of the population of Innishios created a sensation. Our small unknown village was catapulted into the limelight of notoriety that precipitated an influx of more visitors than we had ever seen. Some were journalists, many plainclothes policemen, and a politician or two determined to let the people know that they at least read the papers; but the vast majority constituted the inevitable army of morbidity scavengers who follow sensation as vultures follow carrion. Overnight, it seemed, our village acquired a floating population of several hundred, and the mystery of Innishios relegated even the most important international news to obscure paragraphs in the newspapers and brief seconds on the radio.

The whole mode of our lives was changed, and I don't believe that we have ever since quite reverted to the old halcyon days that went with obscurity.

But on the night we returned to the mainland, leaving David Cartwright asleep on the floor within a stone's throw of Polly Cavanagh's freshly-dug grave, all this was in the future and not even speculated upon. At that moment the mystery was the concern of but a few. The enigma dominated our minds as we crossed the Sound, but we never

doubted that it had a simple and plausible solution. Even in my most extravagant flights of fancy I never anticipated the mystery it was to become. I had been prepared to accept the possibility of abnormally high seas engulfing the island, and sweeping away its few inhabitants, but the comparatively undamaged condition of Polly's cottage and the house on the hill disproved this theory. The only alternative solution that presented itself to me was that, convinced the island was about to vanish under the sea, as predicted by the legend, the islanders had tried to make the mainland in the height of the storm. But one thing alone favoured this conjecture, the fact that Dan O'Leary's longboat was missing from the island. The strongest argument against it was Dan's own sound sense. In such a venture he would surely have seen nothing but tragedy, and I found it very difficult to believe that he would be a party to such blatant madness. The legend had always been a joke to him, but how can one speculate on the reactions of a man faced with what he believed to be certain death? However, this theory was the only plausible one I could think of, and I proffered it to Mulcahy for what it was worth. His comment was typical of the man:

"I'll keep an open mind on the matter. One man alone knows the truth, and to-morrow he may tell us. Until then it is useless surmising. Anyway, I'll phone my report through to the Superintendent to-night."

Contrary to my expectations I slept like a log that night, a dreamless unconsciousness that found me refreshed in the early morning. As a weather portender the sun was shining a little too brightly for that early hour, but it made a brilliant green world outside, and it was difficult to believe that the events of the day before were not just disturbing phantoms that had invaded my dreams during the night. The two-mile Sound was a strip of twinkling tinsel, a scene so removed from tragedy that for a moment I was prepared to accept yesterday's incidents as a hallucination. Reality came in the shape of Seán Malone. He lifted the latch as I was brewing some tea. There was a stubble on his chin, and he didn't look refreshed.

"I guessed you should be up by now," he said, as though six o'clock in the morning was a sluggard's hour. "The sergeant is ready to hop over to the island now if you are."

"I'd like a cup of tea, if he can wait."

"He'll have to, then," said Seán, tilting his cap back from his forehead, "because I'm going to have a cup with you." He straddled a chair and folded his arms across the top of it. "The fine long sleep we didn't have last night. When the sergeant phoned his report, the Superintendent raised stinko. Wanted to know why the navy and the air force weren't alerted, to say nothing of a general S.O.S. to all ships at present steaming

in the area. I wouldn't be surprised to find the army called into this." He sipped his tea. "Six more of our fellows are coming from Dunfoy this morning, and the Super is coming along with them. Mulcahy wants to have a quick word with your friend on the island before they get here."

"Not a bad idea," I said, gulping my scalding tea. "Let's go down so."

Mulcahy was waiting for us by the pier. Behind us the village was still asleep in the bright sunshine, but a breeze lifting from the west had a sting in it.

"Sorry for rooting you out so early," said the sergeant, "but it's important that I talk to Cartwright."

"I was up, in any case," I told him.

"You must have taken your time, then," said he. The acid was in him this morning. Indeed, it was evident that he was a worried man. His lean face had aged a little and he was so obviously preoccupied as we beat across the Sound that I did not intrude on his thoughts. Although he carried his glasses with him, not once did he put them to his eyes. He sat amidships, his elbows on his knees, studying the water between the footboards. When we tied up at the pier he stepped ashore and looked around. I do not know if he expected Cartwright to meet us, but my tenant was plainly in his thoughts. As we went up the hill he said:

"What do you know about our friend up there?"

"Cartwright?"

"Who else!" The sergeant was bilious this morning.

"As a matter of fact I know very little about him."

"How did he happen to come here at all?"

"Well, you know I advertised for a tenant for the house here."

"He just saw and answered the ad?"

"Not exactly. A friend of mine who is also a friend of Cartwright wrote me outlining the young man's requirements."

"And what were they?"

"Peace and quiet. I imagine he wanted to do some work."

Mulcahy deliberated on this for a moment.

"This friend of yours—is he available at any time?"

I was a little surprised at the question, and at a loss to follow his train of thought.

"I suppose so. He lives in Dublin."

"Is he likely to remain there for some time?"

I hesitated a little. "I don't know. He has lived there for the last ten years, but I don't see——"

"It's just a thought," interrupted Mulcahy. "I don't think we will ever have to bother your friend."

Before we reached the house, Cartwright appeared at the door and walked a little way to meet us. He still wore his sweater and flannels, but he looked clean and refreshed. His beard, though adding to his years, invested him with a strange dignity. It also served to mask his expression somewhat. He shook hands with both of us.

"I was expecting you, but not quite so early. Sorry I was so inhospitable yesterday, but I was dead tired." He walked back with us to the house. "Did any of you have breakfast?"

"A hurried one," I said. "I don't know about the sergeant."

"He'll have no objection to a bite," Cartwright answered for him, and Mulcahy did not protest.

The sergeant did not touch on the purpose of our visit until our simple meal was over, and even then he took his time. He looked around the room with an air of polite interest that I had learned was deceptive. Cartwright, looking impassive, sat easily in his chair, his back to the kitchen stove. I was willing to leave the stage to these two.

"It must have been bad out here during the storm?" observed Mulcahy.

Cartwright lit a cigarette. "It was worse than that. I have seen many storms at sea and on land, but this last affair topped them all. The wind must have reached eighty miles an hour. At times, I swear, half the island was submerged. I watched forty-foot waves break over the houses below, and we had breakers over this one every time the tide was high. Yes, it certainly was bad."

"Was that why the others came up here?"

Cartwright indicated the mattresses behind him. "They brought as much as they could lay their hands on. That was at the peak of the storm. They almost waited too long. The way things turned out we didn't feel very secure up here even. There were times when I thought the sea would undermine the foundations or that we would be blown off the cliff. As it was, the roof was pretty near stripped."

Mulcahy stood up and walked to the door.

"How many came up here?"

"All of them. We were really cramped for a while. It was pouring when we brought Polly up—at least I think it was rain; it was hard to tell the sea from the rain at that time. I don't think she ever recovered quite from the shock of that trip up here."

Mulcahy did not turn around. "How long did they stay with you?"

Cartwright brushed his hands across his eyes. The freshness had gone from his face, and I thought he was beginning to look a little haggard again. "I don't know exactly—a couple of days and nights, maybe three

or four. It's hard to say. Conditions were so bad it was difficult to keep track of time."

Mulcahy turned inwards. Framed against the doorway, he looked inches taller.

"Why did they leave?"

Cartwright shrugged. "I don't understand it myself—that is—not wholly. I think there is a legend about the island sinking under the sea. I know that that influenced them in their decision."

"What decision?" Mulcahy's voice was sharp.

"To get off the island."

"How did you feel?"

"Insecure." Cartwright threw away his cigarette. "But I didn't believe the legend."

Mulcahy compressed his lips. "Dan O'Leary must have been crazy to risk a boat on that sea."

Cartwright looked at him, a glint of mockery in his expression.

"Fear can make the most desperate decisions feasible. In the final analysis if they were convinced the island was going to vanish they hadn't much choice between being washed off the island and risking a boat in the Sound."

"I suppose not," said Mulcahy. "How about Polly? Why didn't she go with the others?"

"She didn't want to. I suppose she felt that she was going to die in any case. One way or the other it mattered little to her how death came, so she didn't bother."

Mulcahy sat down again. His face looked relieved. "Why didn't you go?"

Cartwright shrugged. "I remember wishing I could. I rarely wanted anything so vehemently in my life as to go with them."

"But you elected to stay with Polly," I said, speaking for the first time.

"That wouldn't have made much difference one way or the other," said Cartwright. "Polly was very near the end when they left. The reason I didn't go was that I had work to do here. Besides, as I told you, I didn't believe the legend."

"And yet you wanted to go with the others," said Mulcahy.

Cartwright came to his feet and walked to the door.

"It doesn't sound sensible, does it? But that's the way it was."

"Well," said Mulcahy, "whatever the reason, you were certainly lucky you didn't go with them. The way things turned out."

Cartwright thrust his hands deep into his pockets, and for a moment there was about him an air of utter dejection.

"I don't know about being lucky," he said. "I wish I had been with them."

Mulcahy and I exchanged a glance. Neither of us knew what to make out of that last remark. The possibility of derangement suggested itself to me, but I rejected the idea. Depression made many a man say things he didn't really mean.

The sergeant reached for his cap. "You'll probably be bothered with a lot of questions in the next couple of days, Mr. Cartwright. The Super is coming over this morning, and I believe some effort is going to be made to recover the bodies." He shook his head. "I gave Dan O'Leary credit for more sense."

Cartwright spoke without turning. "I'm prepared for all the questions. There's little enough I can tell beyond what I've told you. One thing occurs to me, though. I wonder will there be an inquest on Polly?"

Mulcahy rubbed his chin. "I don't know offhand—considering Polly's great age and the circumstances, I hardly think so, but of course you never can tell. They are very strict about these things nowadays."

My tenant turned suddenly and snapped his fingers. "I almost forgot. All of them left wills of some description before they went away." He crossed to the press and brought a small strongbox to the table. It was unlocked, and inside was an assortment of envelopes. He scattered them on the table.

"Each envelope contains all the valuables that each wanted to bequeath to somebody in particular," Cartwright told the sergeant. "I want you to take charge of them."

"They must have guessed they were going to have a pretty slim chance."

"They knew they weren't coming back," said Cartwright.

"What puzzles me," said Mulcahy, "is how they thought this box would be safe with you, since you elected to remain on an island that was supposed to vanish under the sea."

The younger man shrugged. "Maybe they thought the box would be found. I don't know. The whole business was done rather hurriedly and under great strain." He put all the envelopes back into the box. "You can take this with you." He paused a moment and rubbed his stubble ruefully. "You'll find an envelope containing Polly's effects in there. She left the sum of two hundred pounds, and you will see from what she has written that I am one of the beneficiaries. I don't need the money, so you can divide my share among the other people she has named."

Mulcahy picked up the box and tucked it under one arm. "We'll see what the Super says."

Cartwright saw us to the boat. On the way down, we paused at the patch of scorched earth.

"We noticed that yesterday," said the sergeant. "Any clue as to how it was caused?"

"I thought it might have been struck by lightning," I said.

Cartwright shrugged. "It's quite possible."

"Red lightning," said Mulcahy, with dry sarcasm, and I noticed Cartwright start visibly. He looked at the policeman sharply, and away again.

"The sergeant doesn't believe I saw a red streak in the sky a few nights ago," I said.

"He should," said my tenant, calmly, "because I saw it, too."

"What night was this?" asked Mulcahy.

Cartwright shook his head. "I'm afraid I can't give you dates, but it was on the night that Dan O'Leary and the others left the island. The storm was at its worst then."

CHAPTER 6

THE VERY strange thing about the tragedy of Innishios—and I was to recall it some time later—was that we who lived on the mainland just across the Sound from the island felt no sense of tragedy whatever at the loss of the islanders. The banner headlines with which the newspapers featured the story, the pathos of the most sentimental journalist, failed somehow to bring home to us the reality of our bereavement. I knew and liked Dan O'Leary and Frankie Casey, and I knew their children. Between myself and Katie Farrington was a genuine affection. For all of us, Polly Cavanagh symbolised the Eternal Woman, Ireland. A bond of friendship bound us all together, and yet when I knew for certain that I would never see any of them again I felt shallow and selfish because I couldn't stimulate a sense of sorrow. I felt somehow that I was betraying my loyalty to the dead.

I often pondered this strange phenomenon in the days that followed, but could not arrive at a satisfactory explanation. The nearest I got to the enigma was that they all went together. To my mind the sting of death is left in the living. Death, after all, is as natural as being born, and the dead cannot suffer any more, whereas the agony of loneliness remains with those who survive. In the case of Innishios, death had been merciful. With one fell swoop, as it were, it had taken them all; spreading its dark mantle wide enough to envelop husband, wife and children.

None were to know the sorrow of parting. They passed on collectively, holding each other's hand down the valley of death and up to the brightness beyond. So I reasoned, and found a measure of comfort in it and an explanation for my own hardness.

But for the rest—the excitement which followed—we felt we had a proprietary interest in every activity. We were treated as chief mourners. Nobody asked us to do a thing, and we had every opportunity of watching the official machine go into action.

Naval cutters scoured the Sound like coursing greyhounds and swept hundreds of square miles of sea. Dragging operations went on for days. Ships sailing within fifty miles of the coast were asked to watch for bodies and wreckage. The air was never free from the persistent drone of aircraft. Every available sleeping space in the village was booked. Cars were often parked bumper to bumper for a mile along the sea front. The only public house went dry twice during the first week; and, an important factor, the weather held.

During all this activity I saw David Cartwright once or twice. He was standing up to the ordeal of the affair remarkably well. He was definitely the hero of the piece. At the inquest on Polly Cavanagh, Mulcahy had, for some reason, stressed the fact that David Cartwright had wanted to leave the island with the others at the height of the storm, and although he guessed that to remain behind meant certain death, he would not leave the side of the dying woman. The Sunday papers played this up big, and featured exclusive pictures of my bearded tenant. His expression in all of them plainly showed that he was not enjoying the experience of being photographed.

The history of our community, staid and simple enough, was whipped into such a romantic morsel that at the time we had difficulty in recognising ourselves. The legend of the vanishing island appeared in a startling number of variations in most of the papers. Meanwhile, we sat back and enjoyed it all. It was pleasant to be the focal point of attention. I had been away from it so long that the experience was not unpleasant. But it soon palled, and after the first two weeks, when as yet no sign of the islanders or their boat was discovered, we were a little relieved to find ourselves reverting to normal. The cutters vanished from the Sound, as did the aircraft overhead, and with them went the sightseers. Our tremendous mystery dwindled from columns to paragraphs, and finally disappeared altogether, and we gladly picked up the threads of our familiar way of life.

Only one man, to my knowledge, regretted the retreat of the floating population we had carried. That was Clancy, our local publican.

"Man alive," he said to me one day of the third week, "the unholy

thirst of them newspapermen! To say nothing of the visitors. They'd drink the cape off Saint Paul! And them women!—drink a bottle of stout with any man—long gullets and bullet eyes and paint and powder and all. Another week and I'd have balanced my losses of last year." For years, according to himself, Clancy had been running his business at a loss solely for the benefit of the community.

"Still you went a fair way towards recovering them," I consoled him.

"I suppose I did," he admitted, grudgingly. "Still it might be the making of the place. We might attract a lot of tourists next summer." He did not sound enthusiastic, and he wiped the bar in melancholy circles. "What we need here is a committee—a development committee."

"What could they develop?" I wanted to know.

He looked at me in astonishment. "They could blast the rocks and make a beach. That's all we want; a patch of sand so that the toffs can build little sand castles with their kids, and burn themselves to a cinder."

"If they blasted the rocks in front of your pub," I reminded him, "the sea would undermine your foundations in a year."

"Ah!" said Clancy, with an air of one who had thought of every contingency. "There's places to blast and places to blast. Anyway, if we did no blasting at all there are other ways and means of drawing the crowd."

At that moment Joxer McGrath lifted his head from his arm and brought his palm down on the bar.

"Gimme another drink, Jimmy boy."

Every community has its skeleton. Joxer was ours. He was unpopular with everybody, and he knew it. Drink was, perhaps, the reason for his unpleasantness, for he always had drink in him, but even when he was fairly sober he was an unsavoury character with a grudge against the world and everybody in it. Still, with all that, he was an excellent craftsman on boats, and even I rarely went elsewhere if I wanted a repair job done to my craft. A boat built by this small middle-aged man floated squarely on an even keel and was as seaworthy as a liner, while a repair job was made as good as new. He lived a mile around the coast from the village, and divided his time between Dunfoy and ourselves, for which small consideration we were truly thankful. Right now he had obviously too much to drink, and to give Clancy his due he hated drunkenness.

"I think you have enough, Joxer," he told the boat builder.

The small man wagged his untidily-mopped head and glared under jutting brows.

"Do you tell me so? Amn't I the best judge of that?"

"All the same," said Clancy, who was a quiet man, "I'll give you just one more."

"One was all I had in mind," mumbled Joxer. He stared across at me and winked. "Clancy is worried about the crowd going on him. God Almighty, some people never have enough!"

"Easy now, Joxer," warned Clancy.

"Easy I'm takin' it," replied the other, unperturbed, wrapping his fingers around the glass Clancy placed before him. "How much would you give me if I got them back for you, Clancy? How much?"

"Take your drink," said Clancy, making a disgusted face at me.

"You wouldn't give a body the itch," said Joxer. "But mark my words, if I wanted to I could have them all back and ten hundred more with them." He took a pull from his glass and set it down with an unsteady hand. "But that wouldn't be smart. I know where I can get money for keeping them away." He nodded at Clancy. "Laugh that off." He caught my eye again and tapped his temple with a finger. "Up there you want it."

He finished his drink and buttoned his coat. "Ye'r' all a cocky lot of bastards, anyway. But I know something ye don't know, with all yer education." He walked straight enough to the door, and paused there. "Lost at sea with all hands," he said, "to say nothing of the hero on the island. There's no doubt about it, but our navy and our air force and the whole guards siochana are a stupid lot of gomoges." He spat on the floor. "And where do that leave you, Clancy?" He left us then, roaring with laughter.

Clancy blew out his cheeks when he was gone.

"The one thing you must have in my line," he said, "is restraint. Bags of restraint. Bags of it."

"I wonder how he could bring the crowd back," I mused.

"If he blew his brains out or drowned himself in the Sound I'd run a free excursion from Dublin for the occasion," said Clancy. He wiped his hands on his apron. "After all them city folks, the likes of him is dirt. He pulls down the reputation of a respectable place."

I left Clancy to his grievances and went up the hill to my house. I found myself thinking of all Joxer had said. His mysterious innuendoes filled me with a vague uneasiness, but by nightfall I had forgotten him and went to bed early.

The next day I went over to the island. Although I had had three men make the roof and the ceiling of the big house as good as new, I had determined earlier in the week to ask David Cartwright to stay with me on the mainland. Now that he was alone on the island his presence out there caused many problems. He had no boat of his own, and the

problem of having sufficient stocks of provisions could well be serious in the event of bad weather. My own home was big enough for two, and I felt that I would enjoy his company. I was half-way across the Sound when I saw a boat pull away from the island pier. I was too far away to make out with certainty who its single occupant was, and I deliberately steered a point or two off course to verify my suspicions. The boat, like my own, was powered by an outboard engine. It was not making for the village on the mainland, but cruised parallel with the island. As I closed the distance between us I could see that the craft was painted white with a green stripe around the gunwale, but that was all I could see, for the boat suddenly put on speed and began to draw away rapidly. Not a little bewildered, I put the bow of my boat around and proceeded to the pier, to find David Cartwright waiting for me.

He helped me tie up and gave me a hand ashore.

"That was Joxer McGrath's boat that pulled away," I said.

Cartwright followed my gaze. "It was," he said simply.

"I don't know if you are well acquainted with him," I said, "but he's rather an unpleasant character."

"You don't have to tell me," returned Cartwright. "It's perfectly obvious."

The sight of the green and white boat had brought the unpleasant interlude in Clancy's public house back to my mind.

"I hope he's not bothering you in any way!"

Cartwright pursed his lips. "To tell the truth I never wanted to kick anybody's backside more than his but they say he's an expert on boats."

"He does a good job at a price," I admitted. "But what would you be wanting with a boat?"

"I admit my wants are simple," said Cartwright, "but I will need foodstuffs now and again, and that means getting over to the mainland. I thought of having Frankie Casey's boat repaired."

I feigned surprise. "Surely you're not thinking of remaining on this island alone?"

Genuine astonishment showed in his glance. "That is my intention." I thought that the strain of the past two weeks showed in his face. "I can't see why I should change my plans. This place suits me admirably."

"You'll go crazy over here."

"I'd go crazy anywhere else," he replied, with conviction.

I attempted to dissuade him. "I'd be happy to have you over in my house for as long as you care to stay. There would be nobody to bother you there."

He rested his hand on my forearm. "Thanks, but I prefer to re-

main here. Of course, you're my landlord, and if you choose to evict me that's a different story."

"No fear of that," I assured him, "but I will admit that I would be easier in my mind if I had you off the island. It was different when the rest were here. I could rely on them to take care of you. But now that they're gone—"

"I can take care of myself," he said quietly.

"What about the weather? The last storm lasted two weeks, as you know. I've known them to last months."

"I intend to keep a month's provisions as a basic store."

I shrugged my shoulder. "Well, if you're determined to stay I can't do anything about it."

Cartwright smiled suddenly, and I marvelled at the transformation this always effected. "Your motives are good, and I really am thankful for your concern. But it is important that I remain here."

"You'll have your way, so," I told him. "One bit of advice I will offer, and that touches on Joxer McGrath. You have a slippery customer there."

"I can take care of Joxer, if need be," said Cartwright, and something in his voice and expression allayed my anxiety about him in this respect.

"Have you begun to work on your writing again?" I asked him, by way of changing the subject.

He became enthusiastic at once. He told me he had made wonderful progress in the last week. "I do most of my work in the evening and at night. My stock of paraffin and candles is a bit low."

"I could send you over a drum," I told him.

"I'd appreciate that," he said, "but you needn't trouble yourself. Joxer McGrath is bringing a drum in the morning."

I stared my surprise. "Is he coming back here?"

Cartwright smiled at my expression. "He has to. Frankie Casey's boat has a few holes in it. Joxer plans to fix it on the island."

I was not the least happy about this. "I simply can't stand that fellow," I said inadequately.

"You're not alone," said Cartwright, and we left a distasteful subject at that.

CHAPTER

7

I SAW my tenant quite frequently after that. Once a week he came over to the mainland for provisions, and he never failed to call on me. He became much more sociable with the other villagers, too, and as summer passed and autumn began to merge with winter, he became accepted as one of us. His magnificently bearded figure became part of the scenery and our lives. Occasionally, too, he accompanied me on a fishing or shooting trip, and I found him at all times a very pleasant companion. Because of our common interest we spent hours in front of the fire talking of writing and writers and of what was still to be written, and a warm bond of friendship grew between the two of us.

With Miss O'Dea he was a firm favourite, and she went to considerable trouble to have a special stock of typewriting ribbons and paper for him. Seán Malone and Mulcahy found in him a tough opponent in chess, and though Cartwright lost a few times to the latter, Seán found him invincible.

The secret of Cartwright's popularity was hard to explain. Small talk, which forms the major portion of our conversation, was unknown to him. Whatever he had to say was of some import, but he was courteous to everybody, even Joxer McGrath, who was in his company more often than I liked. During the famous chess matches in the police barracks, Cartwright often spent the entire evening without speaking a word, but for all his silence he counted in any company. So much so indeed that in any of our impromptu debates in Clancy's, although he took no part and rarely offered even a comment, when he left we felt that we had lost a powerful contributor to the solution of the immediate problem with which we were grappling.

Old Jimmy John, who was still disappointed because Innishios had not disappeared under the sea as he predicted, found in my tenant a mirror that seemed to reflect his own wisdom. At times, when he uttered an aphorism seasoned with the profundity of his great years, he winked at Cartwright or nodded his grey head, or, if he was sitting beside him, nudged him with his elbow. Any one of these gestures allied himself with my tenant against the appalling ignorance of the rest of us. Cartwright treated him kindly, and I could see develop between these two a genuine affection which made the old man very happy. Jimmy John seemed to enjoy a certain prosperity these days, too. His tobacco pouch

was always full and his thirst never went unsated for too long. Besides this, it was quite common to see him wearing a shirt or a sweater or even a pair of trousers we had seen on Cartwright. It was in very little ways like that that our islander disclosed his kindly heart and made himself one of us. Once or twice, for purely selfish reasons now, I tried to prevail on him to make his home with me. Even Mulcahy, using the darkening Atlantic as a lever, could not persuade him, but even across the two miles of sea it was comforting to know that he was there, still a neighbour.

Only at Christmas did he leave his fastness for longer than a day. That was when he came to have Christmas dinner with myself and Mulcahy in my house. He remained overnight, since none of us were in any shape for weathering the Sound, but early the following morning he was up and gone. I found a note from him in the kitchen. He thanked me in his usual thoughtful way, and listed the Christmas he had spent with me among the most enjoyable of his life. I did not see him for two weeks after that, because of frequent intermittent gusts from the northwest that lifted the Sound and drenched the world with snow and sleet. My first meeting with him in the new year was to be dramatic and significant, and the chain of events that preceded this climax was activated in the first instance by Joxer McGrath.

I had known for some time that the boatmaker was an occasional visitor to the island long after the repairs to Frankie Casey's boat were effected. I always found the man so unpleasant a character that I took it for granted that when Cartwright's boat was seaworthy again he would no longer be welcome on Innishios. To my surprise I discovered that some months after any reason for his visits was removed, he still crossed the Sound occasionally. On these trips he never stayed long, and was off the mainland only barely long enough to make the trip and return. These trips did not worry me unduly, because I had perfect confidence in Cartwright's ability to take care of himself and I knew he was aware of McGrath's type. Still I wondered about the boatmaker's visits, and once I quizzed Cartwright about them.

"I don't own the island," he said, a little abruptly, I thought. "I imagine he's free to come and go as he pleases. He doesn't bother me."

After that, being unable to think of anything on the island to justify McGrath's visits, I wondered a little more. As for McGrath himself, he was a changed man these days. The world did not seem to have so much amiss with it. On the few occasions I met him he was almost pleasant, and one good factor in his favour as far as I was concerned was his unstinting praise of Cartwright, which was in effect a complete reversal of his previous opinion.

"There's a real gentleman," I heard him say one night, referring to the islander. "A fine upstanding man, not too stuck-up to talk to a body." He gulped down his drink. "Not like some of the bastern people around here that I could mention." I could perhaps have read some significance in the glance he threw at me, but I let him be. He knew I disliked him even as much as he disliked me, but I doubt if this occasioned any loss of sleep for either of us. That was why I was surprised to find him outside my door early one morning some weeks after Christmas. His knock had been peremptory, not unlike Danny Coffey's tattoo, and I opened the door expecting an early post. The sight of Joxer under normal circumstances would have been surprising, but his aspect on this winter morning was so astonishing that I simply gaped at him. He could never at any time be considered a neatly-dressed man, but he always managed a semblance of convention. As he stood framed in the doorway he looked like a very disreputable scarecrow. One lapel was torn from his coat for its entire length and hung down like a forgotten piece of harness. Two bloodstained kneecaps were visible through rents in his trousers, and one length of his braces hung from beneath his coat like a peculiar forked tail. His wild mop of hair stood on end, and a superficial cut which had bled into one of his eyebrows looked freshly congealed. He rubbed his right elbow ruefully as he allowed me to vet him.

"Ye might well gape," he said sourly, and brushed past me.

I followed him into the study.

"What happened to you? Did you fall?"

He sat down on a chair and rested his right arm on the table. "'Tis no fall I took." His eyes beneath the jutting brows flashed malevolently. "But I was put upon. See that!" He held up his left palm, and I could see that the skin had been stripped from the ball of his thumb. "The right one's no better, and but for them I'd have taken that bastern friend of yours and pulled out his cursed gizzard."

Even then I never associated Cartwright with Joxer's condition.

"Who did this to you, Joxer?"

"Who do you think?" he snarled. "Amn't I after tellin' ye? Yer fine friend over on the island."

I stared at him incredulously. Then I remembered suddenly the expression that was on Cartwright's face the day he told me he could take care of Joxer if the need arose. Shocked as I was by Joxer's condition I could not visualise my tenant being unreasonably brutal.

"If Cartwright did this to you he must have had good reason."

I doubt if Joxer expected sympathy from me. He only sneered at my comment.

"Birds of a feather! Ye didn't think I expected ye to say otherwise? Whatever reason he had he'll pay dearly for this." He lifted his right hand to bring it down on the table, and winced at the pain. "He signed his death warrant to-day, mark my words."

The malevolence of the man made me apprehensive for Cartwright, but I did not betray my alarm.

"I wouldn't monkey with Cartwright again, McGrath, if I were you. Next time he'll probably break you in two."

"They'll be no next time for him," said Joxer. "When I meets him again I won't be alone, me cock!"

"If you organise a band against Cartwright you'll put your head in a noose," I warned him sternly. I was really afraid for the islander now, for I knew that this man would stop at nothing to avenge himself. "Sergeant Mulcahy would run you out of the village."

Joxer was unimpressed. In fact he permitted himself a mirthless snigger.

"'Tis Mulcahy will be with me when I visits your friend again, and then his head will be in the noose where it should have been months ago. Nine people don't vanish off an island without somethin' happenin' to 'um."

He grinned at me suddenly, displaying an unsuspected solitary dog tooth. "That's makin' ye think, isn't it?" He leaned back in his chair. "For weeks I watched them guards drag the Sound, with the army and the navy and the aeroplanes lendin' a hand, and all of them lookin' for bodies and for wreckage and the devil knows what. I used to laugh at them bastern fools, and when they went away I left 'um go." He plucked at my sleeve. "D'ye know why?"

I stared at him with undisguised surprise. Every word he uttered was charged with some sinister menace.

"Because," he said, answering his own question, "I wasn't an informer." He spat on the floor and turned up his lacerated palms. "And this is my thanks."

As I stared from his palms to the spittle on the floor a hot spark of anger glowed deep inside me. I longed to take this evil man by the shoulders and the seat of his pants and run him out of the house. But his malicious babble had filled me with a vague disquiet. I fought down my anger and sat down opposite him.

"What are you trying to tell me?"

"Ye'r disposed to listen now, are ye?" he mocked me. "Well I'm not *tryin'* to tell ye anything. I'm *tellin'* ye. Did it never strike ye that with all the watchin' and the lookin' and draggin' and haulin' that not a

sight of nine people was found? Not even a scrapeen of Dan O'Leary's boat?"

I felt oddly cold. Instinctively I seemed to be waiting for some terrible disclosure.

"Or did it ever strike ye as bein' funny that Dan O'Leary, born and bred on the island, out in all weathers, man and boy, would be such a born fool as to try to pull a boat across the Sound in the height of the storm?"

He had touched on the one irreconcilable factor of the mystery that had remained fixed in my memory. For some unaccountable reason I was suddenly on the defensive. It seemed important that Joxer should be convinced that Dan O'Leary's apparent madness was justified.

"If Dan believed that the island was going to sink there was nothing else he could do."

Joxer sucked in his upper lip and blew it out again.

"If ye believe that, ye're a bigger fool than I took ye for. Dan O'Leary's boat couldn't have got off the island that night nor any other night or day for that matter. And I can prove it."

It is strange, but at that moment I believed with an odd sinking of heart that Joxer undoubtedly had proof of what he said.

I bluffed desperately. "I'd like to hear your proof."

"I'll show ye," he said, "if ye'll care to come with me."

"Where to?" I suspected a trick.

"My place. We could run over there in my boat."

I reached for my coat, and Joxer sprang to his feet.

"I'll show the whole scalding lot of ye that nobody can muss me up and get away with it."

Joxer had not tied up at the village pier, but had pulled his boat up on the shingle half-way between the village and my house. The tide had receded somewhat, and we had to drag the craft a considerable distance to the water. The small man was obviously in pain when we were finally afloat, and his right hand was bleeding. He opened the throttle full and went out on the Sound to make a wide semicircular sweep, an obvious manoeuvre to avoid being seen from the village. I took some measure of comfort from this. It was apparent that whatever Joxer wished to prove he wanted to prove it to me alone.

The house of Joxer McGrath was almost completely hidden from the sea. A jungle of vegetation surrounded it closely, and from the heart of this maze a rudely improvised slipway of giant boulders ran out a short distance on the sand. Dark tawny sea-weed covered it like lichen, and the stones were black and mottled with barnacles. When McGrath and I came ashore the low tide was a considerable distance from the

slipway. The boatmaker pulled the boat up on the sand and led the way to the house. The approach to it from the beach was through a cavernous dome of greenery and up a steep pathway to a small patch of ground. The unruly hand of neglect lay heavily on the thatched cottage. The plaster had fallen in large patches from the walls, and here and there cardboard and bundles of protruding rags had replaced panes of glass in the windows. The unkempt thatch on the roof supported parasitical clumps of weed, while a twisting pathway wound its way through the ranks of a besieging army of nettles.

We skirted the path, McGrath leading the way, to where a big shed, in far better repair than the house, stood behind a curtain of foliage poised at the head of the slipway. The wide front gates were padlocked, and the boatmaker searched with difficulty in his waistcoat pocket before he produced the key.

"Ye're in for the biggest shock of yer life," he told me as he unlocked the doors. "Just take a gander in there and tell me what ye see."

I stepped behind his back and peered over his shoulder. For the moment I was unable to grasp the reality of what I saw. I was but vaguely conscious that Joxer was laughing, perhaps at my expression, but I felt no resentment. My mind was much too busy grappling with the implications of the thing I beheld. In those brief seconds the whole fabric of the past months was torn to shreds.

Rigged a foot or so above the ground on a pair of cross-legged trusses was Dan O'Leary's boat.

I had been aboard her too often to be mistaken. I knew every plank of the clinker-built craft, and I did not have to look at the peculiar crooked keel, which always gave her a crab-like leeway, to recognise her. The oarlocks were in place in the gunwale holes, and a pair of oars lay aboard.

I was so stunned that Joxer was speaking long before his words registered.

"—an' if that's not proof, what is? There's enough evidence to hang yer friend on the island."

"Where did you find the boat?"

Joxer began to close the gates. "I didn't find it. The day before the big mackerel break I towed it over from the island to put two new planks in her." He ran his sleeve under his nose. "Durin' the storm it was snug an' dry here. An' all the time nine people was supposed to be drowned out of her."

I was grasping at straws. "Frankie Casey——"

"Don't try to do the eejit," said Joxer. "Frankie Casey's boat was found on the island, and that's all the boats that ever was on the island."

The issue had to be faced. "Why didn't you tell the police about this?"

Joxer locked the gates and pocketed the key. "I often asked myself the same question," he said. "I don't want to get anybody into trouble, and I'm no informer. I never wanted to get mixed up with the police."

"You're going to get mixed up with them pretty fast when they discover that you deliberately suppressed evidence. . . ." I felt suddenly good again. "You may not know it, Joxer, but you're in serious trouble yourself. The Government must have spent a great sum of money in a fruitless search for that particular boat."

A momentary spark of apprehension lighted the depths of his eyes, but it was gone again.

"An' what d'ye say to yer friend on the island? When the guards sees this boat what about him, eh? The hero of the island lying his head off to the whole army and navy and police force. 'They thought the island was sinkin',' says he, 'and off they went in Dan O'Leary's boat,' says he, and all the time I suppose they're lyin' around somewhere with split skulls—buried, I suppose, like poor old Polly. All the work of your fine friend over there who wants to be alone so much he could kill nine people to be that way."

The present situation suddenly tied up with Joxer's conversation in Clancy's public house when he implied that he could have all the visitors and sightseers back if he wanted to. It also tied up with his periodic visits to the island, and perhaps accounted for his dishevelled condition this morning.

"You've been blackmailing Cartwright," I said.

The small man looked at me sharply, but he did not seem alarmed.

"Let's say that he's been payin' the rent for Dan O'Leary's boat here. An' that's *more* damnin' evidence, if ye like. He was willin' to pay to keep my mouth shut."

"Until this morning," I said.

At this, McGrath swore terribly, and for some reason I felt elated by this rage. If Cartwright feared Joxer disclosing the whereabouts of Dan O'Leary's boat, it seemed strange, to say the least, that he had deliberately antagonised him.

"Like I said, he signed his death warrant this morning," snarled Joxer.

"Then why haven't you told the police?"

He brooded on this a moment. Then: "I've told ye a thousand times I'm no informer." His manner changed a little, and his dog tooth made a brief appearance as he smiled craftily. "I came to you because I know ye're a friend of his. There's many a thing a man will do for a friend, and many more a friend will do to prevent that friend swingin'. I'm an

old man and me wants is simple. It wouldn't take much to have me keep my mouth shut."

"What did Cartwright give you so far?"

Joxer spat on the grass. "A lousy five pounds a week. But that kind of livelihood is no good any more. There's no security in it. Livin' out there on the island is too insecure, so I made a proposition to him this morning."

I didn't ask him what it was, because I knew he was going to tell me in any case.

"I offered to sell him Dan O'Leary's boat. I did more, I told him that as soon as he bought it I'd tow it outside with a half-ton of cement on board and stave the planks in."

His little eyes snapped excitedly, and he ran the tip of his tongue over his lips.

"How much did you ask for the boat?"

"A thousand pounds, and no questions asked."

I gave a low whistle. "No wonder he beat you up."

"He puts small value on his neck," said Joxer. "Maybe his friend would be more sensible."

"Are you offering me the boat?" I asked him.

"'Tis a fine craft."

"For the same price?"

"'Tis cheap at that. I'd rather let ye have it for a thousand than take it to the guards for nothing."

"If the guards ever saw this you're good for five years in jail, Joxer," I reminded him.

He made a small animal sound and lifted his hands, palms upright. The torn skin was raw and the blood had congealed. "If I don't get my rights on this I'll inform on Cartwright, be sure of that. Mark my words, and mark 'um well; if money don't stop me, I'd not only go to jail but down to hell itself to bring your friend to the gallows."

Watching his snapping eyes and seeing how the foam flecked the corners of his lips, I could readily believe that this evil man's vindictiveness was boundless.

"I'll have to think it over, Joxer," I stalled. "A thousand pounds is a lot of money."

"I give you the same time as I gave him," said Joxer. "Wan week from to-day. After that his head is in a noose, and Clancy will be doin' a roarin' trade again."

I went out through the jungle that encircled the house and walked home along the coast road.

CHAPTER

8

I WENT over to Innishios in the evening. Since my meeting with Joxer that morning I had reviewed the past months in the light of the boatmaker's revelation, and not one second of it made sense any more. Not for a moment did I believe that Cartwright had murdered nine people, but my friendship with him did not blind me to the fact that there were many serious implications in his deliberate deception of the police authorities. The possibility that Dan O'Leary might have borrowed a boat while his own was being repaired occurred to me, but I realised that the owner would have shown up long ago. The more I thought about the affair the more baffling it became. I had spent enough time with Cartwright to know that there were many traits of his character hidden deeply under his taciturnity, but still I could have staked my life that he was no killer. Whatever his reason for lying about the islanders, I felt, as I steered the boat through the dusk, that he had nothing to do with their death.

To my surprise he was waiting for me on the pier. He tied up the boat securely and gave me a hand ashore. All the time I felt his eyes on me. It was not usual for me to pay him a visit so late, since I knew he worked in the evenings.

"A mite late for a social call," he said, although he did not sound surprised. "But come early, come late, you are very welcome."

"I felt I had to see you," I told him, as yet unable to meet his eyes. "We must have a talk."

"There are worse ways of passing an hour or two," he said casually.

I felt cold standing in the wind, but it was not the wind was making me cold.

"Will we go up to the house?"

"We will so," he said, turning on his heel. He had already adopted our local style of phrasing words.

We climbed the hill together, he just a pace ahead of me all the time.

Once in the house, while he busied himself with the business of lighting the lamp, I sat down at the bright stove and wondered what my approach would be. He saved me the trouble.

"You must have found Joxer McGrath entertaining today," he said, as he set the lamp on the table. There was just a hint of bitterness in his voice. He smiled crookedly at my expression. "When he left me I watched

him through the glasses. He went into your house and I watched the two of you pull away afterwards. I was expecting you long before now." He leaned on the table, and in the lamplight his face was full of shadows. "I don't think I was mistaken. You were with Joxer?"

"Yes," I answered, relieved that his tone was neither guilty nor apprehensive. "He showed me Dan O'Leary's boat."

"I thought he would."

"He offered to sell it to me," I said.

Cartwright turned up the wick of the lamp.

"An expensive buy, I should imagine."

"Just a thousand pounds and a week to consider it."

"And after that?"

I lit my pipe. Cartwright's calmness was reassuring.

"After that, if he doesn't get the money I think Joxer will show the boat to Sergeant Mulcahy."

Cartwright sat down. From where I sat he looked very tired.

"You haven't got a thousand pounds?" He smiled wryly. His tone was half bantering, but I answered him seriously.

"No, I haven't."

"Neither have I. If I had I think I'd buy the damn boat."

I felt suddenly sick in the stomach. On the face of it, it seemed like an admission of guilt. But then a strange thing happened. As I sat looking at him I knew that whatever this man had done I was still his friend and was prepared to stand by him.

"I might be able to borrow the money," I said.

His eyes fastened on me for an instant, and I felt the warmth in their regard before he glanced away again.

"I'll remember that—always. But I could never pay you back. In any case I don't think that the necessity of having it will arise. Joxer has given me a week. All I need is about two to four days." He thumbed a calendar on the table, and I could see that all the numbers of the preceding months and more than half of the present month had been crossed off with a pencil. His last remark frightened me. I asked him what he meant, and he shrugged his shoulders.

"I was merely thinking out loud."

In the silence that descended on us I noticed that the dates he had crossed off extended exactly two days in advance of the present date.

He stood up suddenly and lit a cigarette. He puffed at it in obvious agitation.

"Well, you haven't told me what you think of Joxer's story," he said at last.

"I don't know what to think," I answered truthfully. "That's why I came over to-night. I thought you might enlighten me."

"I told you what happened."

"Dan O'Leary and the others could hardly put to sea in a dream boat," I said dryly.

He stood facing the stove, presenting a stern profile to me.

"If I told you that they put off in some other boat you wouldn't believe me."

I was surprised and disappointed that he was adopting this attitude. "There was only one boat on the island during the storm. That was Frankie Casey's. It had a sizeable hole in it when we discovered it, but it had obviously not been afloat. It was jammed between the gable of his house and the bank where he usually keeps it. It would be a strange coincidence if the sea washed it ashore in exactly the same spot."

"Surely Dan could have borrowed a boat," said Cartwright.

I shook my head. "If that is so, the owner seems surprisingly uninterested in his property. No, David, you know and I know that Dan O'Leary never left this island as you said. Look, man! I'm accusing you of nothing nor am I asking you to tell me anything if you don't feel like it. I come to you as a friend who wants to help if he can."

He began to pace up and down, driving his right fist into the palm of his other hand. He stopped suddenly in front of me. "You know what Joxer thinks?"

"I don't believe you murdered the whole lot of them and spirited away the bodies. If I did I wouldn't be here. One more murder would matter little to a man who had nine to his credit."

He looked at me steadily.

"What *do* you think of this?"

I shrugged. "I'm baffled. But if I were Sergeant Mulcahy I would want to ask some questions in the light of the discovery of Dan O'Leary's boat."

He began to pace the floor again.

"What would he want to know?"

The man's *naïveté* was astounding. "He'd want to know what happened to nine people. He'd want to know why your explanation of their disappearance was a calculated lie. And he would most certainly be interested in why you were paying money to Joxer to conceal evidence."

"Evidence of what?"

"Evidence that you had lied for a specific reason, and something very sinister would be read into that reason."

Cartwright stopped briefly at the table. "I suppose it does look damning, and yet I swear to you that I did not harm a hair on the heads of those

people. If you knew me better you would know that such a thing would be entirely foreign to my nature."

"And yet," I said, "I found Joxer badly mauled this morning."

He had turned away while I was speaking and stood now at the darkened window. The fingers of the hand he held by his side worked convulsively, then were still again. "I simply pushed him," he said, without turning. "He fell and rolled on to the pier. I could have killed him then—easily. I remember suppressing the urge to do so. But I let him go, although I knew he could destroy me."

"He was blackmailing you," I said.

Cartwright turned from the window. "Oh, he was easy at first. He thought I was some kind of a criminal deity. After all, a man with nine murders to his credit is no common person. He was prepared to pay me homage rather than demand anything. Joxer is an evil man. But as he became more and more familiar he shed some of his awe of me. Then he began to ask for money—small sums to begin with, and I could manage them easily." He sat down by the table. The fire had died down and the cold of the night outside was beginning to steal into the kitchen.

"But his silence became more and more expensive," he continued, "and lately he began to make impossible demands. I had not unlimited capital, but I managed with great difficulty to satisfy him—until this morning, when he wanted to sell me the boat. He wouldn't believe I hadn't the money, and I'm afraid I lost my patience with him."

"But good Lord!" I cried, "why should you put up with him at all? Your hands are clean."

He turned over those strong slender hands of his in the lamplight. "I had to keep him quiet. It was the only alternative I had to telling the truth."

"Is the truth so terrible, David?" I asked gently.

He laughed shortly, without humour. "The truth is not terrible at all. But it is more incredible than what Joxer would have you believe. Indeed there is more to it than that. It is essential for a purely selfish motive that nobody knows the truth until I've gone."

I straightened in my chair. "Don't be a fool, David! You're not going to run away?"

His eyes held mine for a moment. "I'm not going to *run* away, as you put it, but I hope to go away quite soon. As a matter of fact in about four days—sooner perhaps. That is why Joxer's time limit doesn't worry me unduly."

"But you can't go and leave things like this," I burst out. "If you go without explaining what happened to the islanders, everybody will believe Joxer's story."

He shrugged his shoulders. "It doesn't make a great deal of difference, but I have done my best to prevent that. I've written down exactly what occurred on this island during the storm." He came to his feet and crossed to the dresser. I heard him open a drawer, and presently he returned with two large envelopes. One was bulkier than the other, and he put this to one side before tossing the other on the centre of the table.

"You wouldn't think it would take so many pages to write the truth," he said.

Without touching it I saw the envelope was sealed. I was still troubled.

"No matter what you have written here," I told him, "human nature being what it is, you will be dubbed a murderer if you go away."

He ran his fingers through his hair. "As you said, my hands are clean. When I've gone, it will not worry me what people think."

"But damn it, man!" I cried, feeling a spark of anger for the first time; "you owe it to society and the authorities to explain how nine people died."

He spread his fingers on the table and looked at me steadily. "Verbally I've told them how Polly Cavanagh died, and that was the truth. As for the others—I have no reason to believe they did die."

CHAPTER 9

FOR a moment I thought I must have misunderstood him.

"What did you say?"

"I told you that I have no reason to believe that Dan O'Leary and his friends are dead."

"But you told us they were—Mulcahy and me—that first day after the storm."

"I don't believe I ever told you they were dead. I told you I did not know. If they are dead I did not see them die. Polly Cavanagh died in this house, and I buried her. She is the only person I am sure of. For the others, I swear that at this moment I do not know whether they are dead or alive."

For a moment the possibility that my friend was deranged settled on my mind. I picked my words carefully.

"You must realise yourself that you are not making sense. They are not on the island or the mainland, but if you admit even the possibility of their being alive they must be somewhere."

He looked at me with a glazed stare, and while I wondered if he were listening to me at all, he tapped the sealed envelope with his finger.

"The whole story is there, only I don't want you to read it or publicise it in any way until you know I've gone. I will leave it for you here just as you see it."

I stared dazedly at the envelope.

"I must know something," I said.

He sat down suddenly and ran his fingers through his hair.

"I suppose the essence of it can be told to you," he said, "but you must give me your word of honour that, no matter how fantastic my story may sound to you, you will not repeat it to anybody until I have gone." As I hesitated, he continued: "At least give me as long as our friend McGrath. I won't hold you to your promise beyond that time limit."

I agreed at once, thankful that he had supplied a compromise between my conscience and my burning curiosity.

"Very well!" he began, locking his ringless fingers together. "First you will want to know something of myself. I have been a soldier most of my life, and according to the law of averages should be dead long ago. I have fought in many lands and for many causes, lost ones and otherwise. There is but one science I am proficient in, and that is warfare. The only explanation I can give for this is that I am the son of my father who owed allegiance to no country." He looked at me suddenly, a glint of amusement in his eyes. "You remember the day of our mackerel fishing? Well, you will understand the type my father was when I tell you that he thought he could defend singlehanded all the small fry of the world. He died in Spain, little knowing that on this occasion he was just a test piece in a laboratory experiment on a new technique in mass destruction. But he had seen enough of wars and the futility of them to desire peace so vehemently that he felt he should do something about it. A few years before he was killed he had an idea of a formula for permanent world peace." He shrugged his shoulders slightly. "Others have had the same idea—it is not original—but he felt that his approach made it workable. I won't bore you with the details." He reached his hand for the second envelope, and drew it to the centre of the table. "He charged me, even as he died, to set it on paper and give it to the world. It is all here. For good or ill it is out of my system and his. When I've gone, you may offer it for publication. Many things have changed since my father first conceived this plan, but I still believe in it."

He paused for a moment to turn up the wick of the lamp again. "When I decided to fulfil this task my father had imposed upon me, I thought it would help if I lived in some desolate place where I would be

unknown and uninterrupted. Fate brought me here, and until my dying day I will be grateful for that." He smiled suddenly. "All this is by way of introduction, and couldn't be of much interest to you under the circumstances. Still it sets the stage, as it were. Through you I got to know Polly Cavanagh, Dan O'Leary, and the others, and in the days of the storm we got to know each other as though we eleven people were the only humans in the world. From the first day of the gale it became apparent that they would have to evacuate the houses below. I have never seen such seas as were running those days, and never want to again. Eventually, as I told you before, we were all under this roof, and it was here in this old house of yours that we learned something of each other." His eyes wandered around the four walls of the kitchen. "Of Polly, her wisdom, her kindness and her courage, I could say a great deal, but since it is all written here I would only be wasting your time. Let it suffice to say that because of our common danger we who lived in this house were closer to each other than brothers and sisters."

My pipe had gone out, and I accepted one of his cigarettes.

"You have no idea what it was like being in this house during the storm," he continued. "It was as bad as could be imagined during the hours of daylight, but after dark we felt that the wind would blow us clean off the cliffs to the rocks below, and incredible seas seemed to be breaking on the very roof. I never believed the legend about the vanishing island, but all the others, with the exception of Polly Cavanagh, were convinced that the prophecy was about to be fulfilled. But the morning always found us alive and still on the island. Then one day about the middle of the first week something unbelievable happened. It must have been about five or six o'clock in the evening, but it is hard to say—the flying spindrift and the rain made a perpetual twilight here—when we heard an unearthly whine, not unlike the whine of a high-speed dynamo. It was louder than the sounds of the storm, and every one of us heard it. I confess we were badly frightened, except Polly Cavanagh. I remember she propped herself up on the mattress—she was lying close to the fire, and she said: 'There's my dream out.' We thought she was raving. We were still speculating as to what the sound could have been when somebody knocked at the back door."

Cartwright drew deeply on his cigarette and exhaled the smoke in the air. "You have no idea of the effect of that knock. We were convinced—yes, even I, and I had not been in Ireland that long—that whatever stood beyond the door demanding entry was not human. None of us made a move to unbar the door, until Polly Cavanagh said to me: 'Can you escape your destiny? If you don't open it, I will'; and she made an

effort to get up. I somehow summoned enough courage to walk across the floor and unbar the door. Outside in the rain was Lanadora."

I had followed his narrative with breathless interest, and my jaws must have been gaping, for at this juncture I brought my teeth together with a snap.

"Lanadora!" I echoed.

Cartwright smiled. "That was her name."

"What or who is Lanadora?" I asked.

"A girl," said Cartwright.

I suspected he was joking, and under the circumstances I was shocked.

"For God's sake, Cartwright——"

"I swear it!"

"Where did she come from?"

"God knows!" said Cartwright. "I call her the girl from God-knows-where." He glanced at me. "You're not convinced, are you?"

"I'm still listening," I told him. "Where did the girl come from?"

Cartwright shrugged. "We asked ourselves the same question when she stood in the doorway, with the rain gleaming on her suit. She was dressed like a motor-cyclist, only the belted suit was all one piece and it was of a material I had never seen before. She wore a small woollen cap on her head and she took this off as she stepped inside. Her beauty was striking even then——"

I saw that he was evading my question, and I interrupted him.

"Where did she come from?"

"You could use the old cliché of dropping from the sky, and in this case you would be dead right." He jerked to his feet and began to pace the floor, casting a misshapen shadow on the wall every time he passed the lamp. He spoke rapidly: "I don't particularly care if you believe me —that will not alter the fact that it is undoubtedly true. This girl had literally dropped from the sky. She had in fact come here from another world in a circular craft and became our nearest neighbour for almost a week." He turned to look at me. "Can you imagine Mulcahy believing that—or anybody else?" He began pacing again. "I tell you I could easily believe it a hallucination myself but for the fact that the others are gone and that a few yards below the house there is a patch of scorched earth."

He came to the table and sat down again, fixing his burning eyes on me with a strange intensity. "When she came to this house she was alone, but we knew later on that there were others with her, but we never saw them, for I don't believe they ever left their strange machine. In the time she spent with us we never learned if the landing here had been a necessity, but my personal belief is that something had gone wrong

with the ship and it had to land to be put right. It was their good luck and ours that they landed here and not in the Sound."

While he had been speaking, my mind had fastened on the patch of scorched heather that Mulcahy and I had noticed when we first visited the island after the storm. I began to think that Cartwright was not mad after all.

"What sort of a person was she?" I asked him.

Cartwright's eyes moved away from me and lost their focus.

"There is a spark of divinity in all of us. Sometimes that is difficult to believe, for we are capable of any evil, but in her that spark was so apparent that she seemed to radiate light. She was the loveliest creature I have ever seen." His voice had sunk lower and he was speaking as though to himself. "She was incredibly intelligent, so much so that she overcame the language barrier simply by reading our thoughts, although she learnt, without apparent effort, sufficient English to make herself understood and to understand us. She shared the happiness of our little community and seemed, after a short time, to become a part of it. She understood our fears, too, and was alive to the dangers that threatened us. Her ship was ready to leave on the worst night of the storm—a night of such terror but I came very close to believing the legend. As it was, Dan O'Leary and the others were convinced that the world was doomed. That was why Lanadora offered to take them away. But I doubt if that was the only reason they accepted, I think they would have gone in any case."

He stopped speaking, but his eyes still held their sightless stare.

"Why didn't you go?" I asked him.

It took about half a minute for my words to register.

"Polly Cavanagh was dying at the time, but I don't think that alone would have kept me here. I felt I had to finish what I started." He touched the bulkier envelope with his fingers. "It may be just rubbish, but it may be important. Only time will discover."

He lit another cigarette. "So Polly and I remained, and the others went away to a new life. I didn't even see them go—I was with Polly when they left the island—but a red streak of fire seemed to fill the world when the craft took off, and I remember feeling afraid and very lonely."

He was silent for a long while after this, and I was mute with the wonder of his story. I was remembering, too, the night I had seen what I thought was red lightning over the island. At length Cartwright looked at me.

"I don't expect you to believe a word of what I've told you."

"A few things tie up with your story," I said. "The patch of scorched earth and the red lightning."

Cartwright's face brightened. "I had forgotten you saw that."

"Yes!" I said, "and so did Jimmy John." An inner excitement was making me want to pace the floor like my tenant. My eyes had fastened on the calendar on the table. I looked at my bearded friend.

"When you speak of going away, where do you intend to go?"

Cartwright watched me guardedly. "I am simply going away."

I would not be put off. "Did Lanadora promise to come back for you?"

He hesitated a moment, and his glance rested fleetingly on the calendar.

"In four days, you said," I cried excitedly.

Cartwright came to his feet.

"I'll see you to the pier."

His face had become set, and I knew him well enough to realise that questioning him further would be a waste of breath. I fingered the envelopes as I stood up.

"When you come again," said Cartwright, "say, in about a week—or maybe when you have to—these will be on the table addressed to you."

I had to be satisfied with that.

As we walked towards the pier in the darkness I remembered his ringless finger. I asked him what happened to his signet ring.

"I gave it to somebody," he said cryptically.

I did not ask him to whom.

I reached the mainland sometime after one o'clock, but I didn't sleep at all that night.

CHAPTER 10

MORNING brought a stiff southwester and torrential slanting rain. I had intended to do some work at my desk, but my mind was filled with Cartwright's story and there was no room in it for anything else. I moped around the house until about ten o'clock, and then, on impulse, I decided to go down to the village. I was reaching for my oilskins when Jimmy John lifted the latch and came in.

The old man's clothes were rain-sodden, although a coarse sack he had fastened about his shoulders had saved him somewhat, and his trousers clung to his match-stick legs. A light-grey sports jacket I had once seen on

Cartwright looked incongruous on his stooped back, and a battered hat looked as though it were pressed down low on his forehead by the very weight of the rainwater which had collected in the hollow crown. His white beard was scraggy and no whiter than the face it enclosed. The gnarled blue-veined hands were trembling.

"God Almighty, Jimmy!" I swore, "are you looking for your end, wandering around on a morning like this?" I unfastened the sack around his shoulders and stripped off his jacket. Except for the top of the collar the shirt was dry. "Wouldn't you think that your long years would give you a scrap of sense—and you with chronic rheumatism."

"'Tisn't the rheumatism I have to worry me this morning," he said tonelessly, blinking his red-rimmed eyes at the fire.

"Well, whatever the reason for your madness," I said crossly, "get out of those trousers before you get pneumonia."

I did not speak again until I had stripped him of everything except his shirt and dressed him in an old suit of mine. Then I gave him a blanket over his shoulders and a glass of whiskey in his fist and set him down to the fire. The pallor of his face was frightening.

"Was it sleep-walking you were this morning?" I asked him sarcastically, although I did not doubt that nothing but a very serious matter would have brought him out in such weather.

He looked at me across the fire. He seemed unutterably tired, although the fire and the spirit were putting the colour in his face again. "Don't go on to me any more, Cathal," he pleaded as a child would.

His appeal touched me to the heart.

"I'm sorry, Jimmy. It is only yourself I am worried about."

He fastened a claw-like hand on my knee, the tendons standing out like taut wires under the white skin.

"Ye don't have to tell me that. But ye have more than me to worry about this time. The divil is abroad."

I looked at him sharply, and his sunken eyes held my own.

"I should know about the divil bein' abroad, since not an hour ago I left him." He stared into the fire. "I saw Dan O'Leary's boat."

The implication of this robbed me of speech. I wondered how many others knew of the boat.

"From what I hear, the fact that Dan's boat is where it is will come as no surprise to ye. The divil told me ye knew about it." The glass he was holding trembled with a slight ague that shook his body.

"Yes, Jimmy. I know about the boat since yesterday. How many more besides yourself know of it now? I suppose McGrath has told the parish?"

Jimmy brought his shaking glass to his mouth and dried his whiskers with the back of his hand. "He's not mad enough for that yet. But there

is evil fermenting in him, and hate. And when a body has filled up with the two of them there's no tellin' what destruction they'll do."

"How did you come to learn about this, Jimmy?"

He did not take his gaze from the fire. "'Tis a terrible thing to be gettin' old. When ye feel the power goin' out of yer legs and yer hands, and when a mile of the road begins to look like the other end of the world. But people are wrong if they think the mind weakens, too. Spryer it gets, man!—and wiser. That is why I know why the divil told me and you and nobody else. 'Twas because he knew we would not betray those we love and that we would take a friend's trouble on our shoulder as if it was our own." He sipped his whiskey again and set the glass on the floor between his legs. "He was mad drunk in Clancy's last night, but it wasn't there he got the drink. He came in lookin' for ye and to shower us with curses, with the Holy Name on his lips at every word. When he found ye weren't there, he goes off hardly able to stand, and we glad to see the last of him.

"This morning I met him again. I always try to make eight o'clock Mass, and as I came out of my home wasn't McGrath waiting for me, with his eyes like two red coals, and the stamp of the divil on him.

" 'There's somethin' I want to show ye,' says he, and takes me by the arm to his house, where he showed me poor Dan's boat. Then he told me how Mr. Cartwright had murdered every livin' soul on the island and that he told lies when he said they were drowned tryin' to make the mainland. He told me then that ye knew about the boat and a bargain he made with ye. He gave me a message for ye. He told me to say that he wasn't goin' to wait the full week, and that if half the money wasn't in his fist by to-morrow at twelve o'clock he was goin' to tell the sergeant about the boat."

Jimmy looked at me then, his red-rimmed eyes moist.

"I don't understand about the boat—and the bargain is yer own business."

It was strange that knowing the nature of McGrath I had not suspected that he would not keep faith with us. Now that he had proved his perfidy I realised that we should have anticipated it. The fact that old Jimmy knew of the existence of Dan O'Leary's boat further complicated matters, but knowing the affection he had for Cartwright I knew he could be trusted.

"It's Dan O'Leary's boat McGrath has down there, Jimmy," I said. "But Joxer is wrong about Cartwright murdering them all."

Jimmy jerked up his head to glare at me. "D'ye feel ye have to convince me of that? Man alive, have sense! D'ye think after eighty-odd years on this callous earth I can't tell a murderer from a bishop? There's much I

don't understand, but wan thing I do know, and that is that my friend out there wouldn't harm a fly. Now, if 'twas bold Joxer ye was talking about, I believe his murderous nature would do for the lot of them."

"All right, so," I said. "But what I'm going to tell you will sound incredible—but I believe it to be true."

"There are quare things in the world," said Jimmy, which did not help me at all.

"Would it seem strange to you to learn that there are people on some of the stars in the sky, Jimmy?"

His eyes probed mine for a moment. Then:

"'Tis a thing I often thought of. I could show you ten men in this townland who believe that little men live under the ground and do all sort of depredation. Would that be any stranger than what ye had to tell me?"

"No stranger than that, Jimmy." And then I told him everything I had learned from Cartwright. He listened to me without a word, but occasionally he bent down and lifted his whiskey from the floor to take a sip of it. The end of my story coincided with the last of the spirit. Very solemnly he placed his empty glass on the mantelpiece.

"'Tis a wondrous story," he said, at last, "and 'tis easier to believe than red lightning, for there's nothin' natural about that." He mused for a moment, staring unwinking at the fire. The colour was back in his face and his voice was suddenly warm and strong. "Glory be to God, Cathal, it does me heart good to knew that Danno and Frankie and the rest are not with the cold clay. Wherever they're gone, Katie Farrington will be boilin' spuds for a new husband." He chuckled to himself.

"However you see it," I reminded him, "our friend Cartwright might well be in trouble before long."

"Not if the weather holds like this," said Jimmy. "The sea is beginnin' to boil, man—and by the same token McGrath is not the only wan that can use his head." He placed his hand on my knee again. "I'm glad I came to ye this mornin', Cathal. Y've given me new heart. I'll go down now. I think the rain is after easin' off a bit."

I gave him a half-glass more for the road, and he left then. I watched him shuffle down the hill, almost smothered in a spare oilskin of mine. His visit had lifted me out of my despondency. And for once I was glad of the wind and the rain that made the Sound a dangerous highway. If the bad weather lasted, we had nothing to fear from McGrath.

But the storm did not hold. Before three o'clock the rain had stopped, and an hour later the sun came out with all the promise of a hot day. Already the sea was smoothening itself out. Before tea-time I could have crossed to the island without shipping a cup of water aboard.

About eight o'clock I went down to the village, and stopped in at the post office for tobacco. Miss O'Dea was just closing up for the night, and gave me the news of the day as she tidied things up inside her cage. With my mind full of graver things I was only half-listening to her until she told me of Jimmy John's purchase.

"What did you say?" I asked sharply, a faint echo of what she had said in my head.

"I told him I couldn't give him any more, because there was five gallons for Mr. Cartwright, and he'd be calling for them before the week was out."

"Was it paraffin you said he bought?"

She looked at me with a flash of impatience.

"Amn't I after telling you! Jimmy wanted two gallons of it."

"What would he be wanting with two gallons," I wondered aloud, "and the days getting longer?"

"The very thing I asked him—him that never bought more than a pint at a time."

A faint tinkle of alarm was beginning to sound in my brain.

"What did he say?"

"He said he'd be in to buy an oil stove from me next week, but that he wanted to make sure of the oil first."

"You didn't give him two gallons?"

"No, indeed! I gave him what I could spare—about six pints. He took it away in a petrol tin."

Six pints could be enough, I thought.

"He must be doting in his old age," said Miss O'Dea. "Where would he get the money for an oil stove?"

"Jimmy is getting very old," I said. "I suppose that's it."

"I like your 'getting,' " said Miss O'Dea. "If you see him and he wants to bring the oil back to-morrow when he gets his senses back, I'll take it from him. You can tell him that."

"I will," I told her, as I went out on the road.

I went straight to Jimmy's home just outside the village on the road to Dunfoy. He was not there, and the front door was open. Although I searched for the oil I could not find any, nor was the smell of it in the house. From there I went to Clancy's. A few men were wetting their elbows on the bar, but the chair beside the fire was without an occupant.

"Did you see Jimmy John?" I asked Clancy casually, as if I was making conversation.

"Divil a sign of him," said Clancy, looking over his shoulder at the clock. "He's later than usual to-night." He polished the bar in front of me. "What will you have?"

I ordered a drink, and drank it without haste, being drawn now and again into the flow of the general conversation, nor did I mention Jimmy's name again. My glass was almost empty when the door was thrown open, and Dan Coffey, the postman, stood in the centre of the floor with round eyes popping from his head and words shouldering each other from his mouth. The very sight of him confirmed my fears, and I did not have to wait for his first coherent splutter:

"Joxer's place is on fire!"

Instinctively I joined the rush for the door.

When we reached McGrath's place there was little enough we could do. The boathouse was a blazing inferno, but the cottage was intact, and we concentrated on ensuring that it remained that way. Lots of people had brought buckets, and we wetted down the thatch with sea water and beat out the minor fires that started in the underbrush. The leaves of the overhanging foliage crackled and snapped all around us, but the sap in the green timber and the morning rain confined the flames to the immediate area of the boathouse. The danger was of sparks touching off the thatched roof of the house, and we watched them carefully when they detached themselves from the flames and shot like meteorites towards the house. In one hour the fire had burned itself out, but by then all that was left of the boathouse was a mound of ashes that glowed fitfully when the breeze took it. We threw water on it until it became as black as the night.

All this time there was no sign of McGrath, and somebody said he was back in Dunfoy. With his house intact, few had any sympathy for how he would feel on his return. My own feelings on the matter were hard to describe accurately. I had not the slightest doubt that Jimmy John had touched off the boathouse, and because he could easily be associated with the affair I feared for him. On the other hand I was jubilant that Dan O'Leary's boat had been destroyed. Without this evidence McGrath's story would be beyond belief.

We were all in very good humour as we returned to the village. No really serious damage had been done, and the hour's work had been stimulating. Most of us had developed a rare thirst.

I was the first into Clancy's pub, and I pulled up so sharply at the door that the others formed a tight knot behind me.

Sitting beside the fire, a drink in hand, was Joxer McGrath.

He leered at me over his glass. "I passed ye a half-hour ago and ye batin' out the flames. Ye must think I'm an awful bastern fool. Did ye think I'd have the boat there under yer hands at this eleventh hour? Did ye think I'd chance ye or that old nanny goat bestin' me? Ye dared too much to-night, me bucko, and by the living God, I can tell ye now

that solid gold wouldn't buy what I offered ye. 'Tis vengeance I want now, not money. Me bould Jimmy will remember this night and the lesson I gave him."

In three strides I was beside him, and gripping him by the lapels of his coat, jerked him to his feet.

"Where's Jimmy John?"

His eyes were wide and his breath was foul. In the depths of the pale pupils I discerned a shadow of fear. I tightened my grip, drawing the lapels of his coat across his throat. A great vein swelled and pulsed in the centre of his forehead.

"He's up in his house," he said thickly.

"I am going up to see," I told him. "If you've harmed him I'll be back." I let him go then, and he fell backwards on the edge of the chair and slid on to the floor.

I heard him curse me as I brushed through the amazed onlookers.

I found Jimmy John's house in darkness, but heavy breathing from the inner room brought me to the old man's side. I lit the lamp and held it over the bed. He lay there fully dressed. There was a patch of blood on the pallid face, and the eye above it was swollen and already blue. He turned his face to the light and smiled weakly when he saw me.

"I met the divil again, Cathal."

"A bad night's work, Jimmy," I told him, a cold anger settling on me. "Are you hurt anywhere else?"

"There's nothing much wrong with me," he said. "He only hit me once or twice. 'Twon't kill me whatever. A small price to pay when the boat is burnt."

"I don't think the boat was there, Jimmy," I said. "I think you got your clouts for nothing."

The old man groaned as if I had struck him, and sat up.

"There's little we can do now, Jimmy, but one thing I must do before this night is down, and that's to tear Joxer apart."

"Don't be causin' any more trouble, Cathal," he said, weakly. "I should have known he'd have the divil's cunning."

I bathed his eye, and was relieved to find that the blood on his cheek was only from a skinned cheek bone. He suffered me to do this in stunned silence. I made a cup of tea for him and gave it to him very sweet. I had read somewhere that this was good for shock, although he did not look in bad shape now.

"I'll be up again, Jimmy," I said then. "I promised Joxer I'd come back."

"Don't make any more trouble, Cathal," he pleaded, as I went out.

The hum of conversation died immediately when I opened the door of Clancy's. Men looked at me strangely, their drinks arrested half-way to their mouths. The chair beside the fire was empty.

"Where's Joxer?" I wanted to know, advancing into the room.

They looked uncertainly at each other, and Clancy, white-faced, leaned over the bar.

"He left a short time after you."

"Never mind!" I said. "I'll find him." I turned to the door and went out into the night. On the step I met Sergeant Mulcahy. He gripped me firmly by the elbow, but his voice was friendly.

"The fine hurry you're in, Cathal."

"I'm looking for Joxer," I said.

"He's not so far away," said Mulcahy, softly. "I've just been talking to him."

All the fight went out of me, to be replaced by a sense of hopelessness.

"What do you want?" I asked him.

"I thought you might come and smoke a pipe with me down in the barracks."

I lifted my shoulder and he released my arm.

We walked side by side along the dark road.

CHAPTER 11

THE smoke spiralling lazily from Mulcahy's pipe reached upwards to diffuse in the haze which he, Seán Malone and myself had made in the warm barrack room. I watched the thoughtful hatchet face of the sergeant with anxiety. The knotted muscles on his lean jaws flexed and relaxed as he clamped now and again on the stem of his pipe, but his gaze was fixed on the fire. He had remained like that through most of my story, leaning backwards from the edge of the chair, and his long legs sprawling towards the grate, so that the long length of him was almost a straight line. For the past two hours Seán kept the fire going. I had not seen McGrath at all.

I had emptied myself in those two hours, and now that I had told everything I knew I felt that an intolerable burden had been lifted from my shoulders. I could—and would—have lied to some men, but never to this lean official who had been part of my life for so long. Nor did I

fear any more for either Cartwright or Jimmy John. I knew instinctively that their fate was in the strictly impartial hands of a man I knew to be honourable. My anxiety sprang from the fact that I had not been strictly honest in not telling him my story before.

The hands of the big clock moved on to the hour as we three men sat there, and the sudden whirring of the mechanism was immediately smothered in a single solemn stroke. Mulcahy looked idly at the yellowed face of it.

"It's later than I thought," he remarked, as though his mind had already left the subject of my talk, but I knew that even now he was trying to weave a pattern from the poor threads of the story. He leaned forward, drawing his legs under the chair, and rested his elbows on his knees.

"I wonder what the Super would say to that!" he said to nobody in particular.

Seán smiled wryly: "He'd say it was a case for the navy again." Seán had kept his thoughts to himself all night.

The sergeant smiled a little tightly at his subordinate's remark. Then he looked at me, turning his head sideways and upwards. "Only I know you so well I'd say you were either drunk or wandering in your mind. As it is, I'll have to take you seriously."

"I warned you it would be difficult to believe," I reminded him.

He cocked an eyebrow at me. "I didn't say I believed it, but I believe that you are telling me what you believe to be true. That's rather involved, but you know what I mean. At least you have borne out McGrath's story about Dan O'Leary's boat." He rubbed his hand on his chin. "Joxer's theory is more plausible than your tale."

I experienced a sudden emptiness in the pit of the stomach.

"You mean about Cartwright killing off the lot?"

He nodded his head.

"But good God, you know Cartwright as well as I do! The man just isn't capable of doing such a thing."

"I don't know," said Mulcahy, doubtfully. "About twenty years ago, before I came here, I was stationed in Rathcar, way up in Connemara. It wasn't a bad place to be, considering everything—far enough away from Galway City to be comfortable for an official, and all the fishing and shooting you could wish for. Plenty of fun, too, at private hoolies—and I was young enough to enjoy them then. There was a very nice family living there in a house that would be considered big anywhere, but in Connemara was a veritable mansion. Their name was de Foubert. The old boy was French, and wealthy, and the greatest benefactor I had ever met. I swear he supported a round dozen impoverished families in

the village. His wife, who was Irish, wasn't half as nice as her husband, but she seemed a nice lady for all that. They had two boys who hated Connemara, and lost no time in getting out of it, but the old boy loved the country, and on most fine days you'd find him with his easel and stool daubing away on a piece of canvas. His pictures looked like the very devil, but he thought they were great, and he was so nice that nobody had the heart to tell him they were no good. Come to think of it, in these modern days they might have been considered great works of art, but to us at that time, since they didn't even remotely resemble the things they were supposed to be, we thought they were just punk. But they kept him happy, and that was the main thing. I became very friendly with him, and we often went fishing and shooting together. You never met such a pleasant associate, and his wife made up some very good lunch baskets.

"One day he sent me a message to come up to the house, and I went there straight away. He met me in the hall, and I could see he was very indignant about something. There was a lot of blood on his shirt. He showed me into his study where his wife lay on the floor with her head battered in, but completely ignoring the corpse, he picked up one of his atrocious paintings from the table and held it up for my inspection.

" 'What do you think of that?' he asked.

"I didn't even know what it was. I said it was excellent. 'You ought to hear what that stupid woman said about it,' he said.

"Ever since," concluded Mulcahy, "I never claim to know any man."

The story clearly indicated that in the sergeant's opinion McGrath's theory was not unlikely.

"But there were factors in Cartwright's story that are inescapable. You must remember no bodies were found. Then there is that patch of scorched earth and that red light that Jimmy John and I saw."

Mulcahy got up and stretched himself.

"I haven't forgotten," he said, through a yawn. "Nor have I forgotten that you were the first to mention red lightning to Cartwright. Anyway, it's too late to do anything about it to-night. I suggest we all get a few hours' sleep and start for the island at, say, six o'clock." He looked at me quizzically. "Do you think you will be able to run us over then?"

I nodded dumbly, and went out. Seán bolted the door behind me.

"Don't worry, Cathal," he whispered. "Everything will work out all right." He did not sound very hopeful.

Back at home I sat before the fire in deep depression. My interview with Mulcahy had shaken my faith in my own judgement. As I sat there I was a prey to all sorts of gruesome suggestions regarding Cartwright. Towards dawn I dozed long enough to dream of the islander. I thought

I saw him on the highest point of the island, a stooped figure eerily silhouetted against a flaming crimson sky. He was shovelling the soil frantically, piling it up on one side. It seemed to me that I stood at his shoulder watching him, but he gave no sign that he was aware of my presence, so intent was he on his work. Catching the reflection of the translucent sky, the perspiration gleamed darkly on his forehead, and when occasionally he paused to draw a hand across his brow, there seemed to be blood on it when he took it away.

The hole deepened and widened until he was working waist deep inside in it. He began to use his spade with great caution now, and suddenly, when he came on something that was no longer soil, he abandoned the tool altogether, and grovelling on his knees began to scoop the earth away with frenzied fingers, until the shrouded shape of something that looked human was revealed. I leaned over the grave as he plucked at the material that covered the body. My heart constricted as I nerved myself to behold the decomposed face of Polly Cavanagh. It seemed then that my shadow fell across the grave, for Cartwright, who had uncovered the corpse's face, looked wildly up at me with eyes like glowing coals. Quickly he covered the face with the shroud, but I had already seen and recognized it. It was the face of Dan O'Leary gleaming white and incorrupt in the crimson twilight. Now on the countenance of my tenant I saw gather a fury that contorted features and dilated veins. I backed away from the grave as he climbed out and advanced towards me. Then I heard the sound of the sea below and knew that I stood on the cliff edge. Cartwright moved up to me and grabbed me by the shoulder. I felt his fingers bite into my flesh and he began to shake me to and fro.

"Forget what you saw," he kept repeating as I swayed on the cliff edge.

I awoke to find myself bathed in perspiration, and Mulcahy shaking me gently by the shoulder.

With the terror of my dream still upon me it took me a few seconds to realise where I was.

"You should have gone to bed, Cathal," said Mulcahy.

The fire was out and I was cold. "I was dreaming," I told him.

"I know," he said. "Whatever it was I'm glad you dreamt it, and not me."

The early morning light was grey against the window.

Seán Malone and Joxer McGrath were waiting for us at the pier. The young civic guard was tightly buttoned in his greatcoat, and the boat-maker had a scarf knotted around his throat. He avoided my eyes, and

when we stepped into the boat he isolated himself in the bows. Seán and Mulcahy sat amidships, with their backs to him.

A cold mist clung to the sea and veiled the island beyond. It was raw on the throat, and whirled past us like eddying smoke, to close behind the boat, gradually blotting out the mainland as if it were stealing our vision. Half-way across, I raised the dark outline of the island and altered my course a point or two. As I came into the pier a gull, startled by the boat, screamed in terror as it wheeled away from us. I thought of my dream as I glided alongside Cartwright's boat.

The light was stronger now, and as we climbed towards the house a breeze was beginning to disperse the mist. Joxer padded behind us almost forgotten.

Unconsciously I moved a little ahead as we neared the house, and was first to the door. I looked uncertainly at Mulcahy. The mist had made little beads of moisture on his eyebrows and his face was pale. He reached a hand for the latch and lifted it noiselessly. The door, swinging away of its own weight, creaked a little.

"Where did he sleep?" asked Mulcahy.

"Upstairs." I looked up the dark stairway, feeling a Judas.

Mulcahy went up the stairs, making no attempt to tread softly. The rest of us went into the kitchen.

I saw the signet ring at once. It rested on top of two bulky envelopes in the centre of the table as if it had been deliberately placed there. . . . "I gave it to somebody," Cartwright had said, and now it was back, a mute witness understood by myself alone. Seán picked up the ring idly and laid it aside to examine the envelopes. I could see clearly that both of them were addressed to me and marked "Confidential." As I stood there, my whole body warmed by an inner glow, I heard Mulcahy come down the stairs. He looked in at us, and caught my eye.

"He's not upstairs."

"No!" I said. "He is not."

I looked at Joxer and smiled at him.

He stared at me in amazement. I thought that he would not look so bad if he had that yellow dog tooth extracted.

PART TWO

Cartwright's Manuscript

1

IT was strange that a chance meeting with an acquaintance of mine on the cross-Channel steamer to Dublin should have ultimately led me to Innishios, and stranger still that feeling I experienced when I first looked on the island from Cathal O'Riain's boat. It seemed to me then not only that had I seen the wedge of green before, but that I was coming home after many footsore miles of aimless wandering, sure of a heartening welcome. Yet all the time I knew that I had never been to Ireland in my life. The sensation was eerie, and shrouded my first impressions with a mist of unreality, for since I knew my senses played me false, I invested all people and all things with the same improbability, like a dreamer who knows he is but dreaming. Later I was to learn of the terrible hypnotic charm of this land of moods and mists, where the twilight breaks your heart with its utter loneliness, and the morning lifts from the hills with a heavy reluctance. I have met a great many Irishmen, good and bad, all over the world, but none like the Irish I have met at home; men and women who needed small excuse for laughter, and smaller still for tears, a people who lived neither in the past nor the present, but stood, as it were, forever on the threshold of Eternity. In all my years abroad I have never known a people more conscious of the transitory nature of life, and I have often thought since I came here that nothing should matter very much to a people who considered that to die was to be "better off."

I felt on that first day that I was one of them and I believe that still, if not by blood then by adoption, for events have bound me so closely to the fate of ten Irish people who made up the population of the island

that to consider myself a race apart from them would be unthinkable. And then, of course, I may indeed have Irish blood. My father, who acknowledged no nation as his own, was born in England. I never knew my mother. When or how she died or where she brought me into the world I never learned, and these things were of little consequence to me until recently. Now I like to think that my mother was Irish. In fact I have convinced myself of this. It would explain to a degree at least the response of my heart when Cathal O'Riain put me ashore on the island for the first time.

I have but a vague recollection of my introduction to the inhabitants of the island. Fragmentary pictures were all my mind retained that day. I was vaguely uneasy, sensing that however good-natured their intentions, these people meant to intrude on my privacy, and just then, more than anything else in the world, I wanted to set my book on paper.

About this I may say little now, since it is finished, and I have little doubt that it will just be one more book on world government added to the many that have emerged from time to time. I am not satisfied with it and feel that I should rewrite, but there is not time now. I have made the fundamental mistake of entrusting the destiny of nations into the hands of men alone. I have proposed a plan in which I have contrived to make all men join hands, but I neglected to make one of them put his hand into those of God to ensure the perfect unity.

The really strange thing about the work was the relentless sense of urgency that beset me to put it down on paper. It was as though I knew beforehand that I had but a limited time at my disposal, and that all too short. During these first days on the island I never was more conscious of the fleeting seconds. As I sat at my table it seemed that I could see the malicious war machine assemble and gear itself for yet another conflict while the formula for perfect peace (as I thought) was still locked in my mind. And how securely locked it was! I do not know how many times I tried to disentangle my thoughts and write them down coherently. I pounded my typewriter for hours, only to find that I produced nothing that was helpful, and yet in my mind I could see the whole plan as clearly as through limpid water. I felt like a seer or a visionary who had had his tongue plucked out. During these first days I was very far from practicing what I proposed to preach. To Katie Farrington must go the laurels for patience and forbearance. I found her persistence in being a good housekeeper maddening. I got up at dawn in order to avoid her inquisitive broom. She forced meals on me when I wasn't hungry. In her passion for order she reshuffled my papers and on occasions swept some important notes into the fire. She tramped up the stairs and along

the corridor like an army in column of route, and slammed the doors as if they were never to open again. In my highly-strung state of nerves it seemed that she swept the floors upstairs with a garden rake. I remember seething at the table while she worked overhead. In my mind I saw myself going to the foot of the stairs and yelling at her to stop making noise. But I never did that in practice. I suspected that she had an acid tongue, and I was a little afraid of her. Only once did I lose control. One of her most maddening characteristics was the humming accompaniment she maintained while she worked. It sounded like a berserk bee loose in the house, and I have rarely heard a more infuriating sound.

"For God's sake!" I implored her one day. "Stop that noise!"

She was working at the hearth when I made my impassioned appeal, but she did not even look at me.

"What noise?"

"That infernal humming. Burst into song if you want, but spare me the droning."

She departed upstairs, taking her brush with her, and for a full hour the house resounded to the slamming of doors, interspaced by the harsh metallic scraping of floors being swept, and high above all this, the incomprehensible words of a wild Gaelic lament that was calculated to drive men insane.

When she finally reverted to her humming later on, I endured it in silence.

Once, too, I spoke to her about interfering with my papers on the table. Burning peat in a house creates a deposit of fine white dust on everything, and I had no objection to her dusting off the table on occasions. However, it seemed to me that she always picked a moment when I was working at it. Grudgingly I would lean back to make room for her duster, and wait with an exaggerated air of resignation until she had finished. Then came a day when I went outside for a turn around the house. When I returned, the table and typewriter had all received attention. Not a particle of dust remained on anything, but all my papers were stacked into one neat pile. The crumpled sheets on the floor had disappeared, together with several scraps of paper on which I had scribbled invaluable notes. I couldn't find anything. I nearly went crazy. I heard her moving around upstairs, and I went out into the hall to roar up at her. She took her time to respond. Finally, when I had decided to run up and bring her forcibly downstairs, she appeared on the landing. She seemed taller from this angle, and invested with an unusual dignity. She surveyed me with a calm scrutiny.

"Well, Mr. Cartwright?" she said. "You called?"

"I roared," I told her savagely. "What in Heaven's name have you done to the table?"

She descended the steps slowly, her fingers barely touching the bannisters, her fine body erect, while I waited for her, quivering with rage. When she reached the hall her gaze was level with mine, a fact I had not noticed before. The dark pupils of her Spanish eyes held a quiet tranquillity.

"Little credit your roaring does you, Mr. Cartwright," she said, "and I'm not one that's accustomed to it. My first husband—God rest his soul—had the same habit. He used to go over to Clancy's every now and again and come home roaring loud enough to be heard in Dunfoy. 'Twas very disagreeable. One night he bumped his head against an iron saucepan I held in my hand, and from that day he was the quietest and soberest man in Ireland." She sighed, and regarded me with wide questioning eyes. "Wasn't that strange?"

"I'm not interested in your husbands, Mrs. Farrington," I told her, somewhat calmer. "I'm telling you not to interfere with the papers on my table again, however untidy they seem to you."

Her face lightened and she threw up her hand in a gesture of delight that was as Latin as her eyes.

"'Tis remarkable how I can understand you when you don't shout. If that's what you want that's the way it will be. You only have to say so."

"I've said so," I told her.

"Then you should have said so sooner," she remarked, unperturbed.

I felt I had dared enough with a woman who had virtually confessed to hitting her husband over the head with a saucepan, but I could not let her have the last word.

"Your second husband must have been a brave man, Mrs. Farrington."

A little colour crept into her smooth cheeks, but she was not angry.

"Brave he was then, Mr. Cartwright, and very brave. Some there are who might tell you that if he could see me he wouldn't have married me, but I was his eyes for ten years and he was content enough. The poor quiet creature was like a child in many ways, but he was a brave man when his eyesight was taken from him, and he died bravely, too."

I looked at her steadily while the import of her words sank into my mind, assuaging everything except the monstrous thing I had said to her.

"Please forgive me, Mrs. Farrington," I said, at last. "Hurting people seems to be the only thing I am good at. I'm a very cross-grained man."

Her face was alive in a moment, and she almost pushed me into the kitchen.

"You're no such thing. You're a very tired boy." She pressed me into

a chair. "I'm going to make you a cup of tea. Too much work you're doing altogether."

And so we had tea. We never quarrelled again, and that evening Cathal O'Riain took me fishing.

2

THE STORM began on the evening Cathal O'Riain and I returned from our mackerel fishing. Up to then the weather had been fine, but even as we stood on the pier I could see more ominous signs of the worsening weather in the faces of the islanders who had come down to meet us than in the freshening wind and lowering skies. These people who virtually lived on the breast of the sea had an inborn instinct about the elements. They sensed rather than saw all the signs and portents.

"That's the last we'll be seeing of Cathal for a while," remarked Dan O'Leary, as my friend's boat was swallowed by the night.

Frankie Casey, who stood beside us, the wind tugging at his unbuttoned waistcoat, looked up at the sky before removing his pipe and spitting carefully to leeward.

"About a week I'd say, by the looks of things. As it is, his work will be cut out for him to get ashore to-night. I never remember me joints painin' the way they did all day, not since the night Davy Farrington came home with his eyeballs frozen in his head. Whatever 'tis goin' to do to-night, it'll be bad, and it'll last a few days."

"Or maybe more," said Dan.

I offered no comment. The only tempests I knew of were of human passion, of hate and greed and lust, but nothing at all of the natural storms. However, Polly Cavanagh, who was with us, touched Casey by the elbow. A few wisps of grey hair had escaped from beneath her shawl and the wind was blowing them across her forehead. In the deepening darkness her face was but a vague grey outline.

"A week, you say, Frankie Casey? A week, and many a long week I'm telling you, and only one of all of us to see the end of it. 'Tis the beginning of my dream. You think you have seen bad storms in your day, but you'll never see the likes of this."

Her voice was even and unemotional, like a person speaking out of a trance or a dream. I felt the short hairs bristle on the nape of my neck, and saw Dan and Frankie exchange a glance.

"We'll wait what's to come, Polly," said Dan, "and whatever 'tis, God's will be done. Sure we can only do our best."

"Amen to that, Dan O'Leary," said Polly, as she shuffled off into the darkness, leaving us three men alone.

Casey gripped me by the arm. "Don't take much notice of Polly, Mr. Cartwright, she'd put the heart across her own mother. She has the second sight."

"I think she's right about the storm," I said, although I could not have known one way or the other. I felt very cold.

Dan O'Leary put a string of mackerel into my hand. "I hope that's all Polly's right about. Take a few mackerel up with ye. They're nice when they're fresh." He paused a moment, then: "I don't like the thought of you up there in that lonely house by yourself. You can bide down here with us for a day or two."

I nearly panicked at the suggestion of being separated from my work as well as being robbed of my privacy. I stammered about being used to being alone.

"As you wish," were Dan's last words to me that night. "But if you change your mind at any time just come down and lift the latch."

There were no locks on the island.

The wind was whipping itself into a gale as I climbed the hill, and the rain was beginning when I reached the house. There was a light under the kitchen door, and my heart warmed towards Katie Farrington.

I was lonely after all in this house.

She looked around from the stove when I came in. "Well, glory be to God!" she said. "Look at the white face of you. Come in to the fire before you get your end. I'll have the kettle boiled in a minute." She took the fish from me and ran her hand over my shoulders. "Have you any sense at all, boy? Get out of that wet sweater."

It was pleasant to be bullied by her, particularly when the warm kitchen was filled with the smell of home-baked bread, and the fat was crackling in the pan.

"It's beginning to rain, Mrs. Farrington," I told her, as I peeled off. "I think you had better get down home before it gets worse."

She draped the sweater over the back of a chair. "And who'd fry the mackerel?" she wanted to know. "And me with nothing to eat since midday. Besides, it will blow over."

"There is an old lady and two hardy men down there who wouldn't agree with you."

She looked at me sharply. "Did Polly Cavanagh say that?"

"She said it would last a week and many a long week, and only one would see the end of it."

Katie straightened, her face thoughtful.

"And what did the two hardy men say?"

"There doesn't seem to be any doubt about it, we're in for a hell of a storm. That's a unanimous verdict."

"I put great *meas* on the saying of Polly," Katie said. "'Tis rarely indeed she's known to be wrong."

As we shared the mackerel I learned much more about Polly Cavanagh.

Nobody knew her age with any certainty, but Jimmy John, an old man on the mainland, remembered her as a tall, beautiful girl when he was a boy. She had become the heroine of a thousand legends and had been invested with the wisdom of Solomon. Yet her life had been tragic. It was said that she was a child of noble blood, a scion of Anglo-Irish aristocracy that had settled in the lands around Dunfoy. At that time the clan of Cavanagh sat proudly on the island of Innishios, which was a citadel of defiance to British authority. The people there recognised no authority but their own and abided by the laws as made by Owen Rua Cavanagh, their daring young leader, who would change the commandments of the Almighty.

Evidently this young Irish chieftain was as handsome as he was daring. Katie Farrington, evidently repeating a traditional description, referred to him as being as lovely as "Oisín in the Land of the Young." Little wonder, then, that when Polly Francis McCracken, fresh from the London Court, saw him in the market place at Dunfoy, she lost her heart to him. And he was so taken by her proud pallid beauty that "he couldn't close an eye thinking of her every minute of the day."

The romance of the young lovers makes a tragic story. Owen's request for her hand in marriage was scornfully declined by the powerful Sir John Francis McCracken, who immediately confined his daughter to the house. The story of the young lovers was noised abroad, and their cause became the adopted cause of every man, woman and child for miles around. So plainly were the sympathies of the population shown in their favour and against him that Sir John resolved to send his daughter away. But on the eve of her departure for England she was smuggled out of the house and into the arms of her Owen Rua. Her escape was discovered almost immediately, and pursuit was close. The young couple managed to reach the boat, but had not pulled a great distance from the land when the soldiers arrived on the shore. The detail was led by a young inexperienced officer who, losing his head, ordered his men to fire on the boat. Some say that in the twilight he could not see the girl and believed that Owen Rua had concealed her somewhere on the mainland. The truth was that the young Irishman, fearing that they might be fired upon, deliberately stood upright to draw the bullets high. He

received a fatal wound in the chest and fell dead at the young girl's feet. The tragic Polly pulled the boat across the Sound to the island that was to have been their home. All the subsequent entreaties of her father could not persuade her to leave her island fastness. She adopted the name of Cavanagh, which would have been hers had her husband lived, and she replaced him as leader not only on the island but in the hearts of the people.

"Of course," said Katie, "there were hundreds of people here then, and a village as big as a town. I often heard that the beach below would be covered with fish for the market at Dunfoy, and there was full and plenty for all."

I stared at her incredulously across the table. I had seen no evidence of any ruins to indicate that there had been many more houses on the island.

"There's not a living sign of a house now," Katie explained. "They were on the south side of the island, but everything is under the sea now. The land is sinking by the minute. When it's all gone that will be the end of the world."

Although her face was grave in the lamplight I could not believe that she was serious.

"You surely don't believe that?"

"I don't know," she replied gravely. "The prophecy is as old as the hills. I heard my mother talk about it, and she heard her mother talk about it. Saint Columcille said the same about Ireland itself. Before the last day there won't be a sign of Ireland or the Irish."

"It will be a strange world, indeed," I could not resist saying, "with the Irish gone."

"It will be more peaceful whatever," she flashed back at me.

Just then a sudden gust of wind rattled the doors and the windows and drove the rain against the glass. Involuntarily both of us looked at each other.

"It doesn't sound like it's going to blow over," I said.

"'Tis a bad sign when the rain beats against the window," she admitted.

I glanced at my watch. We had been talking for almost two hours. Something outside blew over with a metallic clang and rolled around on the small concrete yard. The whine of the wind came under the kitchen door and the latch rattled as if somebody was trying to get in.

"I'll see you down to the pier," I told Katie, reaching for my mackintosh.

"You'll do no such thing," she said, adjusting her shawl on her head, and knotted the ends around her waist.

Ignoring her protest, I pulled on the coat and went out with her into the hall. Immediately I unlatched the front door it swung inwards as though pushed from outside by a mighty hand, and with it came the wind and the rain. I put my shoulder to the door and bolted it, and taking Katie by the elbow, led her back to the kitchen. The gust of wind had blown out the lamp and I relit it in the glow from the stove. When I replaced the globe I looked at Katie. Tiny beads of rain clung to her face like perspiration.

"I don't think you can go home to-night without being saturated," I told her, wondering how on earth I was going to handle this unexpected situation.

"I wouldn't like to be saturated," she said gravely.

"You can sleep upstairs in my bed," I said. "I'll do fine in a chair down here by the fire."

She removed her shawl, and was at once all business. "We can do better than that, surely. I'll fix you up a cot fit for a king. There's another mattress up there." She tramped up the stairs, and after much slamming of doors, she returned to the kitchen with a mattress and a pillow. In an incredibly short time she had a bed rigged on the floor, complete with a single blanket. "There," she said at last. "You'll do fine now." She put a few sods of peat into the stove and picked up her shawl. I guessed the latter was to replace the blanket she had given me from my bed. As an afterthought she foraged two old sacks from the hall and laid one at the foot of the rear door to baffle the draught. She gave the other to me.

"When I go out, put that at the end of this door. It'll stop the draught." She looked at me, her black eyes twinkling. "Funny the two of us being cut off like this."

I think I was a little embarrassed more by the fact that she had proved herself so much more resourceful than me. She misunderstood my expression, and chuckled.

"You needn't have any fear, boy," she said. "I'm old enough to be your mother."

"I'm older than I look," I told her, nettled.

"Well, your elder sister, then," she returned, so obviously enjoying my confusion that I was beginning to get angry.

Before she closed the door I caught a glimpse of her eyes filled with merriment.

"Although," she said, "I might surprise you."

As soon as she was gone I positioned the sack at the foot of the door and took off my boots. I finished a cigarette and extinguished the lamp. It seemed as though the darkness was a signal for the storm to redouble

its fury. Sounds that were imperceptible before became strident now, and the rain was loud against the window-panes.

In the glow from the fire, I slipped under the single blanket.

I was glad I was not alone in the house.

3

I HAVE never had the opportunity of learning anything about the man who built this house, beyond the fact that he was Cathal O'Riain's father, but I have tried, through the structure itself, to formulate some idea of his character. He must have scorned comfort, for there was little that was comfortable about the house. It was draughty, and built on very austere lines. There were no unsuspected nooks or alcoves. The walls reaching from floor to ceiling were as plain and factual as the man himself must have been. The hallway bored right through the house, squeezed by a staircase which led steeply to the landing, and ended in a blank wall where one would have expected to find a doorway. In the area overshadowed by the stairs was a bizarre assortment of odds and ends, from thigh-high waders and oilskins to odd rowlocks, old rope, and a sewing machine. This latter was the only feminine thing in the house, apart from the wisps of curtains at the windows, which, in charity to Mrs. O'Riain, I would say were hung by the rude hand of her husband. But evidently Mr. O'Riain senior knew what he wanted, and built his house to endure against the elements that he had known since childhood.

Only the kitchen door broke the smoothness of the rear wall, which faced north. The eastern gable was unbroken also, and what windows faced west and south were small and graceless and set sparingly into the thick mass concrete. In any other setting the house would have been a monstrosity, but perched on the high dome of this island it seemed sensible and practical, though it could, perhaps, have been made a little more comfortable. In the days that followed, all of us had reason to thank the wisdom and vision of its builder, but on the first night of the storm its strength was an unknown quantity to me.

Some time after Katie went upstairs I fell asleep on the mattress before the fire, but awoke some hours later to find the world splitting asunder outside. I lit the lamp. There was a sense of pressure on all sides of the house, and the doors and windows rattled crazily. The sacking that Katie had placed at the foot of the rear door had been blown back slightly and the rain had encroached on the kitchen floor. A boiling sea seemed to be raging under my very feet, and occasionally—although in this I

must have been wrong—the floor seemed to tremble. After a while I could very easily distinguish between the sound of the sea and the occasional heavy breaker. The roar of the wind, which was well-nigh constant, had an unmistakable quality of its own. The rattle of the rain was audible only when it careened against the window-panes.

As a mercenary soldier I had been in many odd places and contrived to sleep under as many unusual circumstances, but for the rest of this night I did not sleep at all, nor did I try. It was as though I were expecting the house to come apart, or else slip over the cliff edge to the rock below. I sat at the table and tried to work at my writing, but the sounds of the storm filled my mind and I was unable to concentrate. Finally I abandoned the attempt, and tried to make the fire as bright and cheerful as possible. I was engaged in this when Katie Farrington came in. She was fully dressed, but it was obvious that she had been asleep. Her shawl was draped over her shoulders. She looked, a little apprehensively I thought, at the strained doors and window. Then she said:

"I'm worried about the poor creatures down below."

It was only then that I remembered that the others were on the island.

We made some tea and sat down to await the dawn.

At daylight I went down to the cottages. From the oddments beneath the stairs Katie had provided me with a full suit of oilskins. They were stiff and mildewed, but they kept out the rain that met me outside. I found it incredibly difficult to keep on the road from the houses. Innishios is innocent of trees, or even shrubs worthy of the name, apart from a few sparse clumps of gorse, and the wind swept unhindered over the comparative nakedness of grass and heather. It was a blustering gale, holding you immobile one moment, pummelling you in the back the next, and sometimes leaving you in a brief pause of quiet broken only by the falling rain.

The Sound was a sea of spume-flecked turmoil, and the flying spindrift shut out the mainland from view. The clouds were down on the sea.

I had almost reached the first cottage when I saw somebody coming up against me. It turned out to be Frankie Casey, clad like myself in oilskins.

"I was coming up to see how ye got on?" he shouted at me, his face streaming.

"And I'm down here to find out how you people fared."

We both laughed.

"Everything all right above?"

I nodded. "How did things go with you during the night?"

"Divil a shake out of us." His moustache dripped water from each end.

"Katie couldn't come down."

"Good job, too. Couple of her windows were stove in. Come on down a while. Dan was meanin' to have a word with ye, anyway."

We went down together past the first three houses and into the last. Dan O'Leary and his two sons were in the kitchen, three big men around a blazing fire. Dan looked over his shoulder in surprise when we came in.

"You're back fast"—then he saw me: "Wisha come on in and welcome." He turned briefly to clout his son Jackeen across the knee. "You're sitting on your fat bottom all the morning. Take off your coat, Mr. Cartwright, and stay a while."

"I told him ye wanted a word with him," said Casey, who, with astonishing rapidity, had reverted to his waistcoat.

"I do so," Dan agreed, as I peeled off, but even after I was seated in the chair his grinning son had vacated, he did not come to the point.

"Things went all right up there with ye?"

"They did, indeed. Not much sleep, though."

"Last night wasn't a night for sleep. The divil was abroad. Katie Farrington wasn't drowned or anything like that?"

"She was not. She was going to come down, but it was too bad."

"Wise of her not to have tried," said Dan. "This thing looks like it's going to get worse." He pulled a watch from his waistcoat pocket. "In about half an hour we'll be at full ebb of tide, and then it will come flooding back. But the funny part about it is that at this very minute it looks like the tide hasn't gone out at all. Now I think that if the wind blew from the north, with us in the lee of the land, we'd be all right, but if it keeps on from the south things will get very damp around here. Katie's place has two windows blown in—that's not a whole lot of damage, but the way things are, the sea will be breaking against our south wall when the tide is full." He crossed his knees. "As a matter of fact we might have to move up to you for a while. 'Tis possible that the whole lot of us might be paying ye a visit unless a miracle happens. This cursed island is sinking under our feet." He looked at me keenly beneath his bushy eyebrows. "D'ye know the story of it?"

"Katie told me last night," I said.

Dan and Casey exchanged a glance, as if the fact that Katie had mentioned the legend was significant in itself.

"Well, 'twas the truest words she ever spoke," said Dan.

I looked around at the four men in the kitchen. The two younger men were no longer grinning now, and their faces were as solemn as

Dan's and Casey's. I realised that they believed the legend as though it were an article of faith.

"Of course," said Dan, "it might not be the time yet. Apart from the tide not going out far enough, I often saw it worse than this. Didn't we, Frankie?"

Casey was grinding a nut of tobacco between his palms and his empty pipe hung from his lips. "I seen it as bad all right. But there's what Polly said. . . ."

"I was thinking of that," said Dan. "Anyway, we have to make the best of it, so here and now we form a committee of five, and 'tis our job to see that the women and children come to no harm." He spread his hardened palm and ticked off on his fingers. "There's your wife, Frankie, and your three children, and there's Polly and Katie Farrington, and we must see that they're fed and found and snug. And that's going to be a damn sight harder to do than it sounds."

In the next half-hour while we discussed our common problems I found Dan to be a man of resource and decision. I also discovered many things about the communal life of the islanders. I had not suspected that there was any livestock on Innishios, but it turned out that there was. The half dozen sheep, an equal number of goats, and one cow, all of which survived on the island's scanty grazing, were at this moment in the stalls at the back of the houses. There were sufficient stocks of fodder to last a few weeks, so our milk supply seemed assured. Flour was also in good supply, as were tea, sugar, and bacon. Fuel was no problem, since a good harvest of peat was well saved, and every cottage as well as the house on the hill had a good stock.

"So," said Dan, when all these items had been considered, "we're not badly off, considering everything. The only thing we have to do is to keep the rain and the cold out and try to keep on the island in spite of wind, rain, and high water. What do ye think, Mr. Cartwright?"

I was oddly pleased that he had asked my opinion, for I knew that it was not done to flatter me or to make me feel one of the company. This man was wise, and though he would glean some profit from the suggestions of a fool, I felt he would not ask a fool for an opinion.

"As you say," I told him, "the women and children must be our primary consideration. I am not familiar with the weather in these parts, but if you, backed by years of experience, see danger in our present position, I am willing to accept it as very real. So I suggest that we get the women and children up to the big house right away. Indeed, I'd go so far as to suggest that everybody move up there as soon as possible."

Frankie Casey was shaking his head even before I finished speaking. "I don't think all of us should go up."

"We have no way of telling when it might be absolutely necessary," I told him. "And it would be better to transfer in daylight and before the weather gets even worse than it is now."

Dan laid a hand on my knee. "Ye have a sound head on your shoulders, but what Frankie says is right. Even to shift the women and children would be no easy job—though I agree with ye there that it must be done, and this very day. We must take beds and mattresses and bedclothes and ware, all sorts of odds and scraps. We must transport them in the wind and the rain and still keep them dry. But down here there is the livestock to feed and the cow to be milked, and we must have a hand to close a window or a door to see that the storm don't get in before it has to. So it's agreed that myself and Jackeen and Oweneen stay down here, and everybody else goes up."

"I don't hear anybody else agreein' to that only yourself," said Frankie Casey.

"'Tis no great distance to the big house," argued Dan, "and we can move quickly if need be. Mr. Cartwright will want you up above to keep order among your children and three women."

"Ye choose the easy task then, I'm thinkin'," said Frankie.

"All right so," said our chairman, coming to his feet. "Now we've got to tell the women in such a way that we don't put the heart across them. It might all be just a bottle of smoke, but 'tis better to be sure than to be sorry. I'll tell Polly—and Frankie, you tell Rita." He looked at me and smiled. "What's your first name, at all?"

"David," I told him.

"Well, Davy, while I'm gone, try to puzzle out a scheme to transport our little community and its equipment up that hill before nightfall."

As the two older men got into their oilskins, Oweneen, who was the younger of Dan's two sons, sat down on the chair his father had vacated and stared solemnly into the fire.

"Wouldn't we look a lot of bloody fools," he said, "if the sun came out to-morrow?"

"We would, indeed," agreed Dan, caustically, "but I know one fellow with his shins in the fire, and the divil a bit of difference it would make to his looks if the sun shines or not."

As the two men opened the door I saw the leaden sky outside, so low and dark that it was easy to believe the sun would never pierce it again.

In about half an hour Dan returned alone.

"Rita and her clan have agreed to go up," he announced. "We'll be seeing about getting their stuff up right away."

"How about Polly?" I asked.

"Polly is going to stay until she has to move."

4

THE TRANSLATION of the goods and chattels of Frankie Casey and his family was an epic of ingenuity and improvisation. Bundles of bedclothing, food, flour, and meat, wrapped tightly in oilskins or anything that served to keep out the rain, were taken up the hill to the big house. Chairs, ware and cutlery, pictures, pots and pans, and a weird assortment of useless objects belonging to the three small children, included only after passionate insistence, were included in the translation. It sounds easy in the telling, but it took five men four hours to complete the job, and even then we had to leave the bed frames and be content with the mattresses alone. As it was, we lost one of these when it was literally torn from Frankie's hands and mine half-way up to the house. Indeed, we were fortunate we did not follow it over the low cliff into the boiling sea. As the day progressed the wind grew stronger, until towards evening it was shrieking over the heather, and it was dangerous to stand anywhere on the road to the house. We could scarcely retain our footing, and decided to send two with each bundle, no matter how small, one as a bearer and the other as a human anchor and general security officer.

Frankie's wife and children were the last to leave, muffled and belted against the weather. By then we were operating in a premature murky twilight. The wind blew fiercely from the south, and the sea was terrifyingly close to Dan's home. Indeed, from outside the big house the pathetically small cottage seemed already in the deadly embrace of the sea.

"I think I'll be looking in on ye to-night," said Dan.

Frankie Casey and myself were standing with him in the rain.

"I believe Davy here is right after all," remarked Casey. "Maybe while we have the light we should move up the livestock and yerselves."

"And will we bed the cow and the sheep in the kitchen?" inquired Dan with mild sarcasm.

"There's the parlour, if need be," agreed Casey. "Judgin' by the looks of that sea ye won't be stayin' in yer own house to-night."

Dan brushed the rainwater from his face. "We might be dry enough in your place or Polly's. 'Twould want to get real bad before 'twould reach that far."

"You'll get little sleep to-night anyway, wherever you bed down," said Casey.

Dan shrugged. "'Tisn't sleep I'll be thinking of." He turned to his sons, who had their backs to the wall of the house. "Look at the pair of

them, in the name of God! Will ye take your rumps from against the wall and let us be going down." He thumped my chest gently with his fist. "We'll be seeing ye all to-morrow, Davy, don't you fret."

Dan was a poor prophet. He was to see us long before morning.

When he and his sons had gone down to the cottages, Frankie and I went inside to organise our little community, only to find that the matter had been taken out of our hands by Katie Farrington. All the paraphernalia had been dispersed to various regions of the house, and although the dresser bulged with extra ware, and the stove was festooned with more kettles and pans than usual, it was only the children who gave the impression that the house was crowded.

Rita Casey, whom I had not remembered meeting before, was still a young woman, more than fifteen years, I would say, younger than her husband. She had been on the island only eight years, but she might have been born there, for all the fear she showed in her present position. True, a trace of anxiety was evidenced now and again in an apprehensive glance as the rain rattled against the window, or a glance upwards at the ceiling during a particularly strong blast of wind. But apart from these normal indications of uneasiness she was as calm as if transferring her home to a strange house was an everyday occurrence. She had supreme confidence in her husband. I saw her look at him now and again, and although nothing passed between them, she obviously drew strength and courage from his presence. When he was out of the kitchen she fretted and spoke irritably to the children, but once he returned she was serene once more.

The children, all girls, showed a marked resemblance to their mother. They were, as Katie said, "like steps of stairs," the eldest being seven and the other two six and five, respectively. They were perfectly healthy children, astonishingly mature, apt to argue fiercely among themselves, and yet capable of the tenderest affection towards one another. They were completely unaware of any crisis, and though they were a joy to watch, I was somewhat relieved when Frankie put them to bed upstairs. Frankie in the role of father was a revelation. It was plainly apparent that he was a complete slave to his children. When he sat by the fire they played over and under his knees. They tugged at his waistcoat, pulled his moustache, and the youngest child, determined to pluck out his eye, climbed on to his chest to do it. Frankie would never say a word, but emitted unintelligible grunts that could have meant anything. Only when his wife spoke sharply to them did they give the poor man any rest, and this invariably proved a brief respite, for after a moment they renewed their activities. Of Katie Farrington, although she berated them like a virago and threatened them with the most terrible punishment,

they were absolutely unafraid. It seemed to me they rather enjoyed her raving, for even the youngest would suspend operations to listen to her with an air of great interest. They knew Katie better than I. The last I saw of them that night they were draped around their father in spotless nighties as he took them upstairs to the improvised bed.

Katie had found and assembled an old bed-frame, and the children slept in this on their own mattress in a room bright with a peat-and-wood fire. By the time Frankie returned, Rita and Katie had tidied the kitchen. Without the children the place seemed vast and empty.

Rita looked at her husband as he came in. "Do you think they'll go off?"

"They were asleep before I came down," he told her, "although how they could sleep with the wind thumping on the window beats me. 'Tis a terrible night altogether."

"It can't get no worse surely," said Katie.

We drew a measure of comfort from this, for it indeed seemed that the fury outside was as bad as it could become. In the comparative quiet after the children, the noises of the storm pressed in upon us, stifling our conversation and isolating each of us in his own thoughts. Rita and Katie knitted, and we two men had little else to do than stare at the fire and listen to the wind. Frankie was visibly uneasy. He kept shifting his chair, and seemed to be having difficulty in getting his pipe to draw well. He disassembled it a few times to make a great business of cleaning and overhauling it. Finally, he gave a tremendous sigh.

"I'm just thinkin' of that madman O'Leary tryin' to drown his two sons on a night like to-night."

He glanced over his shoulder to where our oilskins hung on the back door. Only I saw that glance, and understood the significance of it.

His wife glanced up from her knitting. "Dan O'Leary is safe, or nobody is. Besides, hasn't he Jackeen and Oweneen to take care of him?"

Frankie said nothing, but settled in his chair once more and pulled at his pipe, but a nerve on the bunched muscles of his jaw jumped and spread and jumped again. I knew that both of us were thinking the same thoughts.

The roar of the sea was persistent now, and I guessed that if its fury was bad beneath us in the lee of the island it must be terrifying down where the cottages stood in the mane of the wind. It was almost eleven o'clock when Frankie slapped his hands on his knees and came to his feet.

"I'm goin' down below to see how they're getting on," he announced.

His wife stopped her knitting, little clouds of fear darkening her eyes.

"Are you going out of your mind? You'd be blown off the island."

"Yerra whist, woman," said Frankie, gently, "and have sense. How can I sit here, not knowing what that eejit of a man is doin' down there. It won't take a minute."

I lifted myself from the chair. "I think I'll walk along with you to stretch my legs," I told him, and got a warm look of gratitude from Rita.

Frankie grinned at me. "'Tis a perfect night and all for a stroll, with a full moon."

"That's what was tempting me outside," I said.

He nodded his head with satisfaction. "All right, so. The air will do us good."

The manner in which Katie and Rita helped us with our oilskins reminded me of the ladies of old buckling on their knight's armour. A storm lantern was lighted, and bearing this more as a beacon than a guide, we were let out into the night. Before the door closed, I noticed that Katie had her beads already in her hands.

The fury of the storm was unbelievable. The roar of sea and wind combined to create a cacophony that was well-nigh deafening. It confused the mind and paralysed the limbs. The swift transition from the warmth of the kitchen to this maelstrom gave the night a curious unreality. For a few moments it was like living in a terrible nightmare. Reality returned when Casey locked his arm in mine, and we moved down towards the cottages, picking up in the light of the lantern the fringe of heather marking the road's edge. The icy rain bit into our faces and numbed our hands, while the wind searched for our mouths and nostrils to smother us with our own breath. I walked outside Frankie, nearest the sea, like a blind man, guided only by my companion. We couldn't have been more than a few hundred yards from the cottages when Frankie Casey stopped and I felt his arm stiffen. I knew he was either listening or straining his eyes ahead in the darkness. He put the lantern behind his back, and both of us leaned forward against the wind. Down below I thought I glimpsed a faint yellow light. I thought at first it was one of the lighted windows of the cottages, until Frankie put his mouth to my ear, his moustache like wet moss against my face.

"They're on the road and in trouble I'm thinkin'."

We hurried then, a little less cautious of our bearing, trying to feel the hardness of the road under our feet. The yellow point of bobbing light ahead grew almost imperceptibly nearer, but finally, after what seemed hours, resolved into a lantern in the fist of Dan O'Leary. With him were his two sons clothed in oilskins and supporting between them the

small figure of Polly Cavanagh, so muffled against the rain that I could not see her face. Only one pale hand was visible. Nobody exchanged a word. Instinctively I realised we were witnessing the aftermath of near tragedy and that the danger still persisted. We bunched together, forming a screening knot around the woman, and faced up the slope. With the wind behind us the going was easier, but it jostled us together and plucked at our legs as though trying to unbalance us.

Katie and Rita must have been watching for us through the window, for the door of the house was opened before we reached it. Polly was taken from us as we trooped in but the sodden O'Learys were not forgotten, nor were we. From some unsuspected hiding-place in the house, Katie Farrington produced a bottle of cloudy spirit, and although I have drunk many beverages, none of them had the raw reviving bite of that.

"It'll put the heart's blood back into you," said Frankie.

While Katie and Rita tended Polly in the kitchen, Frankie and I found enough clothing between us to dress the O'Leary clan, and even managed to find sufficient footwear for them, although Oweneen ended up in my slippers. The bottle was passed round again and again, and finally seemed to restore Dan's power of speech. With his hair tousled from the towelling and his face unusually pale in the lamplight, he looked oddly unfamiliar.

"I've seen many a night, Frankie, but nothing like this."

Frankie's pipe was going well at last, and the general air of tension was beginning to relax.

"I had it reasoned out," continued Dan, "that as soon as I could tell the difference between rain and spray at the window we would move next door to your place. But we never had a chance. We didn't even have time to put a coat on our backs. One moment we were sitting beside the fire thinking of bed, and the next the sea was in the window, and the whole raging Atlantic Ocean was beating down the door. I tell you we were soaked to the skin before we got up from the fire. The next sea nearly washed us out the back door." He looked steadily at Frankie. "Your place will go, too, I'm thinking."

Frankie paused a moment to press the tobacco down in the bowl. "God send us no greater loss," he said.

Dan began towelling his head again. "The beasties and cow are gone. We couldn't get to them in the dark. We found Polly in bed with her beads in her hands and one of her windows blown in. She didn't want to come. She said it was one part of the dream she wasn't sure about."

"What part?"

"She wasn't sure whether she was to die in her own house or up here."

The five of us looked at the lamplight, and the wind rattled the door.

"Die, is it," said Frankie. "Well, we'll see. And God won't be too hard on us."

5

THE NEXT morning the wind backed to the north, but continued to blow as strongly as ever, only this time there was a sinister bite in it. Dan O'Leary and his sons went out in the early morning to search for the livestock, but returned without seeing even a sign of them. They reported that with the exception of Polly's, the condition of the cottages below was bad, and that the sea was breaking regularly over their own home. They were convinced that the island had subsided at least twelve feet—something I found very hard to believe. My own theory was that extraordinary weather, coinciding with certain lunary conditions, had resulted in unusually high water, but I kept that theory to myself.

There was no attempt to minimise the seriousness of the loss of our milk supply and meat on the hoof. Under normal circumstances the loss would have been heartbreaking for these poor people, but under present conditons it was disastrous. After midday, we took it in relays of two to transfer the peat from Polly's cottage to augment our own supply. I was appalled at the damage done to the two cottages nearest the sea. The roof tree of both was broken and the thatch sagged in the middle. I thought that all the windows and door had been battered in, but we could not approach too closely, for the waves had claimed them with grasping claws of spray.

Rita Casey cried a little when she learned about the cottage, but her husband made light of it.

"We'll build another, don't fret. On higher ground and with plenty of space and wide windows, and the door in the right place. And I wouldn't be surprised if it didn't cost us a ha'penny. We'll get compensation out of this."

There was no talk of building on the mainland. Even now, when they suspected their homeland was sinking under their feet, they were determined to cling to the island.

Dan O'Leary and Oweneen formed the last relay, and they told us about the boat on their return.

"If your boat keeps on rattling around the way she is, Frankie, you'll

either lose her or she'll be stove in. We couldn't reach her to make her fast."

Casey showed greater concern at the possible loss of his boat than the more certain loss of his house.

"If it lets up a bit I'll go down and see what can be done," he said.

But it did not let up, and by nightfall the gale had developed into a near hurricane. We lost some slates off the roof, and the rain seeped through the ceilings of all the rooms upstairs. Buckets and pails were mobilised to deal with this emergency, and mattresses and bedclothes were shifted downstairs. A fire was lighted in the room across the hall from the kitchen, and the unperturbed children were put to bed there. It was almost midnight when the rest of us could gather around the fire for a general discussion on our position. Only then did I become aware of Polly Cavanagh. We men had been so preoccupied with the business of searching and fetching, of drying ourselves and getting wet again, that her presence passed unnoticed, although I recalled Katie Farrington's remark some time earlier that the old woman was feeling poorly. To-night, seated in the corner by the stove, she certainly did not look well. I thought at first that it must be because I had not seen her with her head uncovered before, and that the snow-white hair, parted in the middle and pressed close to her head, gave her an unusually ashen look. Her wrinkled hands held on her lap had a visible tremor, and her breathing was rapid.

Dan O'Leary must have noticed how ill she looked. He squatted beside her and placed a hand on her knee.

"I think you're getting a chill, Polly. Would you like a drop to heat ye?"

The old woman smiled slightly. "It'll take more than your drop to keep the cold out now, Dan O'Leary. I'm thinking it's the cold of death is on me."

Katie Farrington, who had been brewing the inevitable pot of tea, turned on her in feigned fury, but the glance she threw at Rita was of tortured anxiety.

"What kind of talk is that, Polly? You'll be asking us to bury you yet. The divil himself would feel the cold on a night like to-night. You should be in bed with a hot punch."

Polly looked at her with piteous entreaty.

"I'd like to stay with you all around the fire. The room would be dark, and I'd only be disturbing the children."

Rita Casey proved to be the practical one. "Why can't we rig up a bed for you, Polly, just in the corner beside the fire, and ye can rest content and in company. You'll never get any ease in that hard old chair."

The light in Polly's eyes was eloquent enough. Without a word, Dan O'Leary and Casey went upstairs and brought down a bedstead and assembled it beside the stove. While Katie and Rita prepared the old woman for bed, we men went into the hall. Here the wind and the rain were buffeting the door relentlessly, and after the warmth of the kitchen, we felt chilled and oddly dispirited. Casey lit his pipe.

"Never seen Polly so bad."

"I think she's on her way home," said Dan.

"Only a day before the rest of us," said Frankie solemnly.

Dan sighed. "That's all that's in it. We must all travel the same road."

Oweneen and Jackeen said nothing, and for the first time in my life I was never so aware of the inevitability of death. I felt suddenly afraid, and was relieved when we returned to the kitchen. The addition of the bed to the kitchen equipment, and the knowledge that Polly was seriously ill, had a depressing effect on all of us. But it did not last long, and it was Polly herself who dispelled the gloom.

"Wisha, the deep sighs of all of ye," she said, as the silence extended itself about us, "and the long faces. You're not waking me yet, you know. Will you give us a bit of a song, Dan?"

Dan looked at her in astonishment, but he recovered immediately. "Did ye ever hear me sing a note in my life, Polly Cavanagh?"

"Indeed I did," said Polly, staring up at the ceiling with memories in her eyes, "but that was before you lost your fine woman."

Dan's gaze returned to the fire, and his face strangely softened.

"It was a hard blow for you to take, Dan, and you've never been the same man since."

His forehead furrowed.

"How long ago was that, Dan? My memory is not good now."

"'Tis a good while," said Dan.

"All of twenty years it is, Dan. Twenty years, and it took the song out of you. But the bitterness died, thank God, much sooner than that."

"Wouldn't it be selfish of me to want her back out of the happiness she has," said Dan. "Back to the reek of the turf and the cold of the floor. . . . But I missed her."

I noticed that Jackeen and Oweneen were looking at their father with sympathetic eyes, feeling for him alone, since they could scarcely have remembered their mother. Here in the lamplight it seemed that this woman unknown to me had died but yesterday. One had to look at death in a different perspective in Ireland.

"She was a fine girl," said Katie Farrington, "and a great neighbour."

This remark was addressed to Rita Casey, whose knitting needles clicked and flashed in the lamplight.

"I remember the day ye were married, Dan," said Polly. "The song you sang at the wedding!"

"I had something to sing about," admitted Dan.

"And plenty of porter to soften yer vocal chords," said Casey. And laughter was with us again.

The conversation drifted into reminiscences of all those who were present at the wedding. Katie and Polly and the two older men began knitting the lives and subsequent movements of the people who gladdened that wedding day. There seemed an astonishing number of them dead. And so we forgot for the moment the hazards of the present in the memories of the past, and found a sense of cosy security in our close comradeship. Polly kept the conversation going, leading it when it flagged into alternative deep channels, and allowing the others to guide and divert it with the tools of their talk. Ultimately, she even managed to get me talking about myself. I told them of some of my wanderings and those things I had seen in lands they had only heard about. They listened with great interest, and I remember feeling as though I were talking to children. When I finished, Jackeen, whose eyes were shining, drew a deep breath.

"Ah! that is the way to live, surely. Different faces and places and strange manners and customs. It must be terribly interesting altogether."

"Isn't it strange that after all that," wondered Oweneen, "ye should want to bide here?"

I envied him his illusions. "It might seem strange to you, Oweneen," I told him, "but you have on this island the very thing the whole world is seeking. It may be in other parts of the world, too, but here is the only place I have known it."

The boys did not understand me, but the others did.

"And please God," said Polly, "what you have found you will never lose, nor will anybody take it from you."

The following morning I awoke sore and unrefreshed. When all the talk had been done on the night before, we settled down to sleep as best we could. We left the kitchen to the women, and we five men made what shift we could in the second room. We butted together what mattresses remained, and lay down, nobody bothering to undress. I lay awake most of the night listening to the storm outside, and envying Casey the tranquillity of his stentorian snores. Towards dawn I slept a little, and was awakened by the soreness of my bones. I rolled off the mattress on

to the floor. Dan and Casey were talking quietly in the half-light. The weather sounded as bad as ever.

"You sleep like a child," remarked Dan.

"I didn't get much of it," I told them.

"The little you had will do ye good, whatever," consoled Dan. "I was just telling Casey here that we must have a shot at fixing the roof. Five men and three children trying to sleep in a room this size will never do."

"So one of us will have to be blowed off the roof," said Casey.

"It might be possible to fix the holes from the inside," I suggested. "Even if the plugs leak a small bit we could get a couple of buckets above the bedroom ceiling."

"Just what I was saying!" said Dan, with satisfaction. "Another night in here would suffocate us all. Some of us will have to sleep upstairs."

Just then there was a tap on the door, and Katie put in her head. In the bad light she looked a little haggard.

"The fine sleep ye are after having. Could ye do with a little breakfast?"

"We could try," said Dan, coming stiffly to his feet. "How did the night go with ye across the way?"

"We didn't do too bad, except for Frankie's snoring putting the heart across us. Poor Rita was mortified, being scandalised by her husband like that."

"Never snored in me life," said Casey, blandly. "'Twas the winds ye heard."

"I must tell her," said Katie. She looked at me. "The fine book ye can write now."

I smiled at her. There was a fine thread of friendliness between myself and Katie. "I could so. I think I would call it 'The Vanishing Island.'"

"Or 'The Vanishing Islanders,'" said Casey, a remark I thought in poor taste. But I was irritable this morning.

While Jackeen and Oweneen and the three children still slept we had our breakfast. Polly, who was propped up with pillows, looked smaller and paler in the shadowed kitchen. Frankie Casey's wife seemed a little haggard, but she brightened considerably when her husband appeared. The smell and sizzle of frying bacon did much to cheer us.

"It takes a woman to make the best of a bad situation," said Dan, seating himself at the table. "This day we will organise ourselves indoors to make a few comforts."

"We will so," said Frankie.

"At least," continued Dan, spearing a slice of bread with a fork, "we will put Casey to sleep in the hall to snore in peace." He laid the

butter on thickly and lifted the bread to his mouth. At that moment a drop of water fell with deadly precision on the top of his forehead. The incident petrified everybody, and drew every eye to the ceiling.

"Glory be to God!" said Dan, "didn't we forget to empty the buckets and baths upstairs. The place must be swimming by now."

The three of us had a belated breakfast.

6

WE WORKED on the roof all that morning. The weather did not permit a direct attack on the outside, and some weird and wonderful ideas were introduced under the roof to prevent the rain from coming through the bedroom ceilings. There were almost a dozen slates off the roof, and unfortunately the leaks were fairly evenly proportioned over the entire upper living area. Some were not very serious, but most of them allowed the rain in, in steady trickles. Many of these responded to Dan's genius for improvisation, but one or two stubborn leaks still oozed water even after the most elaborate treatment. Finally, the most that could be said about the morning's work was that the quantity of receptacles used to catch the rainwater was reduced by half, and the remainder would have to be emptied only once a day. However, it was painfully clear that in spite of the small degree of success we achieved, the bedrooms would not be fit for habitation until the weather cleared.

We had by this time become more or less accustomed to the sounds of the storm which swept against the house, but while we were working in the attic under the slates, the fury outside was frightening. A million screaming devils seemed to people the dark space under the peaked roof, and the rain came like continuous hailstones. The timberwork groaned and creaked under the constant stress and strain, making it evident that, strong though the house was, it was doubtful if it could withstand this buffeting indefinitely.

"That's a morning's work wasted, anyway," observed Frankie Casey, when we had finished. "There will be a dozen more holes to plug up to-morrow, and the divil a bit of a roof over us at all the day after."

"This old house stood up against many a storm," said Dan. "Old Davy O'Riain knew what he was building."

"Ay!" agreed Frankie, "but there was never a storm like this."

Dan did not deny that. "There must be a first time for everything," he temporised.

Towards evening the three of us donned oilskins and went out to

look at the cottages below. The sea seemed to have claimed three of them completely, enveloping them in mottled patterns of flying spray. Only Polly's house appeared untouched, but we couldn't be certain, from where we stood. We were unable to make ourselves heard, for the wind tossed our words away or pressed them back into our throats before we could give them utterance. We had to wait until we got back into the house before we could talk.

"'Tis worse than yesterday," said Frankie. "The island is gone down a lot."

Dan was busy at some mental calculation. He consulted his watch. "It's not high water yet."

"That makes things even worse," said Frankie. "We must be going down like a stone."

Dan peeled off his oilskins. "God forbid! Anyway, we'll say nothing to the women."

I don't think that at this time I was so sure of my theory about lunar attraction and abnormal high tides. That the island was virtually sinking beneath our feet seemed plausible for the first time. Vanishing islands were not unknown. I had heard of them disappearing overnight, and even being created in a single day, but that was in the tropics, and in each case the cause was volcanic disturbance. Here, it seemed, we were being bludgeoned beneath the sea by the wind and the rain.

High water occurred at five o'clock, and we went out again to look at the houses below. This time Oweneen and Jackeen came with us. We stood close together on the road and braced ourselves against the howling rain. There could no longer be any doubt that we were witnessing something inexplicable. Though Polly's house was still above and beyond the full fury of the waves, the other three houses were being battered by tons of water. All about us the sea raged in relentless confusion, presenting an awe-inspiring, ever-changing pattern of irresistible force. The very ground seemed to tremble under the impact of the waves.

Dan and Frankie were roaring into each other's ears, but the younger men surveyed the scene in silence.

When we went back to the house we remained in the hall. Dan's face, streaming and slightly blue, was serious.

"Unless it lets up soon I wouldn't give much for our chances."

Somehow I hated to see him discouraged, and I attributed a great deal of his despondency to the legend of the vanishing island, and Polly's prophecy.

"I don't altogether agree, Dan," I said. "We're all right so far, and this can't last for ever."

"It don't have to last for ever," returned Dan. "Another night of this

wind and rain and we'll have no roof over our heads. Besides, the island will not have to sink much more to have the sea breaking in on us up here."

"I don't believe the island has sunk at all," I told them, and explained my theory, although at that time I was not quite sure I was speaking the truth.

Frankie stared at me in surprise.

"That's an interesting story," he said, "but 'tis plain that something's sinking. Ye saw the houses below."

"It's just that the water is getting higher, and that gives the impression we're sinking," I explained. "That's not a condition that will last. If the island were sinking we'd feel it in the house."

They looked interested but unconvinced.

"I've lived on this island a long time, Davy," said Dan, "and I never saw water so high, so it must be that we have gone down to meet it. The ground even now is like jelly under your feet."

He was right in the latter point, for the shock of tons of water hurtling against the cliff beneath the house could be sensed through the leather of our boots.

"Anyway," said Frankie, supplementing Dan's argument, "don't ye be forgettin' what Polly said—a week and many a long week and only one to see the end of it."

He had scarcely finished speaking when the door through which we had entered a moment before was blown violently open and the gale rushed in among us like an infuriated presence. A second later, what appeared to be a cataract of green water swept across our vision and crashed on the ground outside. In an instant there were inches of water in the hall. Oweneen put his shoulder to the door and closed it. The metal latch had been ripped off, but the bolt was intact. As the door was secured once more, Dan bent down and dipped his fingers in the water and touched his tongue.

"This is salt water," he said, solemnly. "The sea is beginning to break over this side of the island."

For an hour after this, occasional breakers leaped the forty-foot cliff to deluge the house, and we had to maintain a constant vigil upstairs, since many more slates had been blown off or smashed in, and the leaking roof was beginning to get out of control. Fortunately, when the tide receded a little we got no more than spindrift over the cliff, but the unexpected development of the sea invading a position we considered invulnerable had shaken us somewhat.

We were all a little uneasy as the night closed about us.

During the day Polly had visibly worsened. She could no longer sit

upright, and seemed to have greater difficulty in breathing. Rita Casey, worn out with trying to control three restive children, was nervy and short-tempered, and it was evident that the strain was beginning to tell both on her and on Katie Farrington. Katie announced the fact that there was no more butter, with a curtness that was foreign to her.

"You're a great woman, Katie," I told her, as I sat down to the table. "The island has yet to be created that would sink under your feet."

I was surprised and gratified that she coloured at my tribute, and thereafter she regained some of her old spirit.

Later, when the children had been put to bed, we sat down to discuss our position. It was certain now that this bad weather would continue indefinitely, and because of the extensive damage already done to the roof and the constant menace of even worse a night, a continuous vigil was considered essential from now on. It was decided that each spell of night duty would be of four hours' duration, from midnight to four and from four to eight. Two men would share each shift, and it would be their duty to see that the house held together and that the large variety of receptacles collecting rainwater in the bedrooms upstairs were emptied before they overflowed. Since there were five, one man would have a completely free night every fifth day.

There was no longer any necessity to disguise from the women the very real danger that threatened us, since the evidence of it had been made apparent to them during the hours of high tide. Their fortitude was heartening and a source of great strength to us, but they obviously welcomed our suggestion of providing a constant watch during the night.

Polly did not even comment on our proposal; indeed already she was in the detached twilight of death, with only the deep rise and the fall of her chest to show she was still with us. I doubt if she could hear us.

We men tossed a coin between us to determine what pair would begin the night's vigil, and it turned out that both myself and Casey made the first team, Dan and Oweneen the second, leaving Jackeen with a free night.

"The fine sleep he'll be having surely," was his father's comment, a remark that relaxed our tension somewhat, and earmarked the beginning of the strangest part of our adventure.

No sooner had our laughter died when we were immediately conscious of a sound that was neither the wind nor the rain nor the sea. It was a thin whine, pitched so high that it was more sensed than heard. I remember feeling Dan's apprehensive eyes on me as he canted his head like a spaniel, and I remember also noticing that Polly's breathing became more agitated and her thin yellow fingers clutched convulsively at the bedclothes. A moment later the sound had ceased, leaving us in

a pause of utter calm, for it seemed that the storm had ceased its own trumpeting to listen to this intruder. I saw Katie Farrington cross herself hurriedly, a bleak expression of fear on her face for the first time. Rita Casey's eyes were fixed on her husband as if there she would find mirrored the answer to the enigma.

Slowly, in an oddly detached manner, Dan O'Leary came to his feet and walked to the window. We watched him pull the wisp of curtain to one side and brush his palm over the glass. He shielded his eyes from the kitchen light and peered into the darkness. Nobody spoke, but at that instant the sounds of the storm were renewed, and we heard a shock of rain rattle against the window. Instinctively, Dan recoiled, and came over to the fire again.

"Did ye ever hear the like of it in your lives?"

"It must have been only the wind," said Frankie, without conviction.

For some reason everybody looked at me as though, being a stranger and familiar with places and people unknown to them, I could supply an explanation.

"I've never heard anything like it before," I said, "although Frankie could be right. I can't think of anything else that could cause it. Since it's a freak storm, it is reasonable to expect many unusual sounds."

The tension was beginning to ease. Already I was beginning to forget the precise characteristics of the noise that had startled us. Had I been alone I would have been convinced that it had been a trick of the imagination. Gradually, we relaxed, with the solitary exception of Polly. The old woman was sitting upright now, a wild expectant expression on her wrinkled face, as if anticipating a recurrence of the phenomenon. She clutched the bedclothes so tightly that the knuckles were spots of pure white against the veined parchment of her skin. "There's my dream out," she said.

"It was only the wind, Polly," soothed Katie. "It's cutting capers tonight."

The old woman made a small gesture of impatience, as though Katie's words had distracted her from some intense concentration. Katie looked at us in bewilderment; she opened her mouth to say something, and emitted a half-scream as a peremptory knocking sounded on the rear door.

It is difficult to describe the effect the knocking had on us, and hard to understand why I immediately and without question accepted the fact that this latest sound was created by an agent other than the storm. Coming on the heels of our previous experience, it completely unnerved us. We knew that apart from ourselves there was not a living soul on the island, and it appeared that even now somebody stood out-

side the door demanding entry. I had never believed in supernatural happenings and had been raised in the belief that death ended all existence, yet at that moment the entire structure of my beliefs was levelled, and I was prepared to believe in anything. One thing only was I sure of: I did not want the door opened nor did I want to know the identity of the person or thing that stood outside. There was no doubt that the rest felt the same way. Katie's face was so ashen that I thought she would faint. Rita clutched convulsively at her husband's arm. Dan O'Leary and his sons stared wide-eyed at the door, and Casey's pipe lay neglected on the floor, where it had fallen from his mouth. Polly's behaviour was bewildering. She had lost the intense attitude of listening and had once more lain back on the pillows. She seemed perfectly calm.

The knock had been a peremptory tattoo, but now the sound of the wind came clearly from outside. After my initial fright, reason was beginning to assert itself. Something, a pike handle or a broom of some wreckage from the sea had been thrown against the door and had played on the taut strings of our nerves. A logical explanation must lie beneath this apparent phenomenon, and I was beginning to feel ashamed of myself, when the tattoo was repeated—not the irregular and haphazard knock of a plaything of the wind, but measured blows making a definite pattern of sound.

Once more I became the centre of all eyes, as if I alone possessed the answer to this eerie dilemma, but it must have been apparent from my face that I could not help them. Then Polly, with a surprising show of strength that added to the eeriness of the moment, lifted herself on her elbows and fixed her paling eyes on me.

"Open the door. Can you escape your destiny?"

The sound of her voice had an immediate calming effect on me, and her words were oddly compelling. I stood up and walked to the door. As I passed Katie I saw her make a movement with her hand as though she would detain me, but her fingers merely brushed my sleeve. I reached the door as the knocking was repeated, and paused for a moment before making the crucial decision. I glanced once at Polly, half expecting further instructions, but her gaze was over my shoulder, as though already fastened on whatever stood on the other side of the straining timbers.

I unbolted the door and allowed it to swing back against my foot, sufficiently far to allow me to see outside and still partially shield my body. A gloved hand, strangely slender, rested against the door-post. The pressure on the door increased, but I did not know if it was the wind or if somebody was pushing from outside. I leaned a little to one side so that I could see around the edge of the door, and involuntarily removed

my foot. The wind and the rain swept triumphantly into the kitchen, and with them came our strange visitant.

The flame of the oil lamp flared wildly and almost went out, and a puff of smoke billowed from the stove and sailed like incense to the ceiling as I placed my back against the door and bolted it. . . . Whatever and whoever this strange being was, it now formed one of our company. As enemy or friend was yet to be revealed.

Frankly there was nothing fearsome about this stranger, and one thing that was immediately apparent and reassuring, she was a woman. She was almost as tall as myself and clothed in a one-piece suit belted at the waist and clinging as tightly to her legs as ballerina hose. The blouse portion of the suit was of a material that resembled leather, but seemed much thinner and softer. The rain gleamed on it in crystalline beads. A tasselled cap resembling wool was pulled on her head and hid her ears. Although she had stood outside in the rain for some time, her apparel did not appear sodden or in any way uncomfortable.

All this I noticed, even as she stepped beyond me to the centre of the kitchen, but I had merely glimpsed at her face. I circled her now to prop my back against the table, and stared at her. Her beauty was startling. I could perhaps attempt to describe it in great detail, but I would give little conception of the reality, for I have never seen beauty such as she possessed. The rain still clung to her skin, which was of a creamy pallor, and as I watched her, she pulled off her stocking cap to reveal short blond hair, boyishly cut. She smoothed it fleetingly with a gloved hand. Her calm regard slowly appraised our astonishment, as though she were viewing a tableau, and I thought I saw her lips twitch in amusement. I was the last to meet the shock of her regard. I had the impression of eyes that could be either grey or green and charged with a strange magnetic power.

"Who are you?" I asked her. "How did you get on the island?"

Her eyebrows lifted a little at my question, but her expression remained unchanged. She seemed to ignore my questions, for she looked again at the others, all of whom were on their feet, still petrified, in various attitudes of amazement. Then she raised her left hand, which I noticed had been hovering over a holster-like pouch fastened to her suit below the hip, and spread the fingers of one hand against her breasts. She said, by way of introducing herself:

"Lanadora."

7

MY MIND was beginning to free itself from the clogging sediment of superstition. Two things were blatantly obvious. She had not reached the island *via* the sea, even by shipwreck, since her clothing was comparatively dry, and—this I found astonishing—of all the people under this roof she was the most composed. Not only that, but there seemed to emanate from her personality a sense of power which fixed our respective relationships at once. I felt instinctively that she was in complete command not only of the unusual situation but of each of us.

Her garb hinted that she might be a flier forced down on the island. I thought of the wind outside, and the thick wiry heather that covered the island, and the chances of anybody, however skilled, landing an aircraft on our wide-swept citadel. I could not envisage the pilot of such an aircraft remaining as unruffled and composed as this young lady, even if she did not have to step from a tangle of twisted spars and metal. Besides, there was something distinctly foreign about her that I could not associate with any race or nation. Her eyes, for instance, though ever so slightly oblique, were not oriental, and they seemed unusually large and luminous even in the lamplight.

I asked her again how she got on the island, and once more became the object of her calm regard. She tilted her head slightly as though savouring my words. Then she lifted her shoulders in a gesture that was familiar. It said that she did not understand English. In my wandering around the world as my father's brother-in-arms I had acquired a few languages and the rags and tatters of a few more, and a score of dialects. I tried them all on her without success, although she seemed to listen attentively and with great interest.

Finally I looked with helplessness at the blank faces of the others.

"She doesn't understand a word I'm saying."

Dan O'Leary had recovered his composure.

"For that matter neither do we."

"Wouldn't it only be polite to ask her to sit down," suggested Katie.

I drew a chair from beneath the table and positioned it beside mine, and with a gesture invited her to sit down. She inclined her head graciously and smiled, but before sitting, she drew the chair more to the centre of the floor and to such a position as to place herself between us and the door.

"I think we'd all better sit down," I told the others. "This is a damned awful situation. She doesn't seem to know any language."

"Maybe she's deaf," said Frankie Casey, who was sitting on the edge of his chair fingering his pipe as though feeling for fractures.

"She heard me all right," I said, with conviction. "She just does not understand."

Polly, leaning back on her pillow, seemed to have withdrawn from us again. Suddenly I remembered that I had an atlas among my books. I rummaged for this, and finally found it. The others and our visitor watched with great interest as I opened it on the table. I turned to the girl, but found that she was already at my side. I was conscious of a faint perfume as she bent over me to examine the atlas. I showed her a map of Ireland, and by gesture indicated that everybody in the room was associated with that country. Then I made a brave effort to discover what country was her own. I flicked over the pages, pausing at each map and pointing both at her and the page each time. Each time I did this she shook her head with a slight smile of amusement. We reached the end of the atlas without her claiming to be a citizen of any country.

I was about to close the book in despair when she took it from my hands and flicked the pages rapidly back to the beginning, to a page which showed a diagram of our solar system. Then she pointed to herself and pointed upwards.

The implication of what she was trying to convey was so staggering that I gaped at her in astonishment. I felt her faintly amused regard travel over my face. It was apparent that she was enjoying the situation. I stared at the elliptical lines that surrounded our sun, each threaded through a tiny ball representing a planet. I pointed to the circle representing Mars, and she shook her head. Then, with a broadening smile, she crossed behind me and rested her finger on the table on a spot fully two feet from the picture we were looking at. I felt the perspiration damp on my forehead as, with an unsteady finger, I drew an imaginary line from the spot she had indicated to the circle representing our earth, and looked at her enquiringly. She nodded at once, and seemed very happy that at last I understood.

I closed the atlas thoughtfully and turned to the others.

"It appears," I said slowly, "that we have a visitor from another world," realising at once that it was not happily phrased to people whose other world was the hereafter, but Katie understood.

"You mean she's from the moon?" The last word was hooted.

"From much further away than the moon," I told them.

They gazed at the girl in awe.

"No wonder she couldn't understand ye," breathed Dan.

Frankie Casey was not quite convinced. "Surely she couldn't have dropped from the moon or anywhere else. How did she get down here?"

"I don't know," I replied, "but she must have arrived in something. I'm going to have a quick look outside."

Oweneen, whose eyes were fairly popping now, seemed to leap to his feet.

"I'll come with you, Davy."

I looked at his father, and Dan nodded.

"You'd better or he'll bust down the door, by the looks of him."

Our oilskins hung outside in the hall, but as I made for the door, the girl came to her feet in one smooth motion and touched me lightly on the arm as I passed her. The half-smile was still on her lips, but her free hand had dropped to the holster-like bulge at her side. It was a gesture that was both significant and alarming. As I stared at her, nonplussed, she motioned me back to the chair, at the same time glancing at the door I was about to open, and shaking her head. It was an unmistakable command not to move from the kitchen.

I returned to the fire. "I think we will wait until morning, Oweneen," I said, but I guessed that they all knew that we were virtually prisoners in the house.

I sat down, feeling very helpless, wondering what on earth we were to do. The girl, however, did not return to her chair. With her hand still resting on the holster at her side, she opened the kitchen door leading to the hall and looked out cautiously. Then she returned to the centre of the kitchen, leaving the door open and looking at me, indicated the lamp. As clearly and unmistakably as though she had spoken in my ear, I understood that I was to take the lamp and follow her.

Without hesitation, I lifted the heavy metal-stemmed oil lamp from the mantelpiece and went out with her into the hall. She opened the door of the second room and indicated that I should precede her inside. The soft yellow light discovered the three sleeping children locked in a variety of unconscious embraces. I studied the face of the girl as she bent over them. It was oddly impassive, and as she stretched out her hand towards the sleeping girls I was a little apprehensive. However, all she did was to cover one little arm with the top of the blanket, a gesture that was somehow reassuring. She examined the rest of the room briefly and went outside again, holding the door open for me and closing it quietly.

The bare steps of the stairs led upwards into the darkness of the landing. Once more I preceded her upwards to where the damp draughts probed at us and the drip-drip of rainwater falling into half-full vessels made tinkling sounds in the darkness. While we examined the two upstairs rooms, the lamplight must have revealed our miserable plight to our visitor more graphically than words. For a long time she stood looking

thoughtfully at the silver lances of the leaks before she turned and descended to the hall.

When we returned to the kitchen I noticed that the others had not moved, as though the darkness in which we had left them had petrified them in various attitudes of anxiety.

"We've made a tour of inspection," I told them, as I replaced the lamp. I did not add that I believed the tour was a security check-up on the part of the girl, as though she wanted to ascertain our numbers and disposition. "I don't believe we have anything to fear from her," I finished, remembering how she had adjusted the blankets over the sleeping children.

While I was speaking, the girl had crossed to Polly and was looking down at the wrinkled, pallid face.

"Very sick," I told her, involuntarily, as though I were talking to a child.

She looked at me briefly. "Very sick," she repeated, clicking the last two consonants. In the lamplight her face had lost its impassiveness. She seemed genuinely concerned about Polly.

I moved over to her.

"Her name is Polly," I said, articulating slowly.

"Polly," she said, exactly as I had pronounced it.

I took the atlas from the table, and turned to the page which illustrated the elliptical circuit of the earth around the sun. I shadowed the path of the earth with a pencil, and held up one finger to indicate a year.

"One year."

She seemed to understand immediately. Then with both hands I tried to tell her Polly's great age.

"Very old," I said.

"Very old," she echoed, and then to my surprise, "very sick."

She turned from the motionless women, and smiled at me; once again I had the eerie sensation of a voice speaking in my mind requesting my name.

"David," I said.

She repeated it thoughtfully.

Then I introduced the entire company, pointing at them as I repeated their Christian names.

She repeated them all without difficulty, and I thought I saw a half-smile on her lips as she attempted "Oweneen" and "Jackeen." When the introductions were done, she pointed to the hall door, and with that uncanny telepathic power seemed to enquire about the three children.

I indicated Frankie and Rita, and for the first time the smile of our

visitor broadened, to reveal a row of even white teeth. She walked to the rear door then, and undrew the bolt. I had followed her and braced my shoulder against the timbers as they swung inwards. She turned to the others, and once more pointing to herself, said: "Lanadora."

Then she stepped into the howling night, and I closed the door after her.

8

"THE MORE I think about it," said Dan O'Leary, heavily, "the less sense it makes. I wouldn't be surprised at all to wake up to-morrow morning and find I dreamt the whole bloody thing."

It was four hours or so after the departure of Lanadora, and he and I were keeping vigil in one of the sodden rooms upstairs. The storm still raged outside with unabated fury, and the leaks overhead had increased at an alarming rate as the wind stripped more and more slates off the trembling roof. A smoky storm lantern guttered beside us in the only square yard of comparatively dry timber upstairs. We had emptied all the receptacles through one of the windows, and the dripping rainwater, rattling noisily on their empty metal bottoms, sounded like a score of discordant drums. I was desperately tired and disinclined to talk, but Dan's remark faithfully echoed my own sense of unreality.

"It's an odd situation all right," I agreed.

The lobster man clicked his tongue. "All these cursed pots and pans will be down in the kitchen to-morrow and this floor will be our roof. There's no hope at all for Polly now, and if Casey's children don't get pneumonia or galloping consumption out of this I'll be surprised." He looked up at the stained ceiling, which was sagging here and there as if it held a great weight of water. "I wonder who the one will be?" he finished, cryptically. Then: "'Only one to see the end of it,' she said."

Indeed, Polly's prophecy seemed feasible now, and it had been pressing on my own mind like a physical weight. I no longer doubted that the old woman was clairvoyant; she had foretold the severity of this storm with uncanny accuracy, and her behaviour just prior to Lanadora's arrival seemed to indicate that she expected some such visitation. Besides these, there was her strange remark about my own destiny. The future was now locked in her unconscious mind, which at the moment was nearer to Eternity than to us. It was a reasonable assumption that she would not be the one to survive this crisis, and, like Dan, I found myself wondering who the fortunate person would be.

"Maybe 'twas the girl she had in mind," said Dan, out of his musing. "Although she is out there somewhere on the island, she strikes me as being indestructible."

"You can be sure she's not out in the rain," I said. "She must have arrived in some sort of a craft, and I doubt if she is alone."

This presented Dan with a new line for speculation. "How so?"

"It's just a theory of my own. She did not want any of us to go outside until she had checked us over pretty thoroughly. Besides, if whatever she came in had to travel vast distances, it is hardly likely she'd be on her own."

Dan brushed his hand over his eyes. He was as tired as myself. "That's one more bloody thing to worry about."

"As soon as it is light we should be able to see what she came in," I said.

Even in the dull light of the storm lantern I could see that Dan's eyes were lustreless and bloodshot.

"It will be daylight in a few hours, Dan. Why not lie down for a while? There's nothing more we can do up here, anyway. I'll call Frankie or one of your boys at dawn as soon as it gets light."

"It'll be high water again about then," demurred Dan. "We'll have to watch that. It'll be our greatest danger, I'm thinking."

"It won't be for a few hours more, in any case," I persisted, "and you'll be all the more rested to deal with an emergency when you have a couple of hours' sleep behind you."

He smiled crookedly. "Sure, ye have great arguments, but how about yourself? You're as fagged as me."

"I can keep going a small while yet."

Dan heaved a sigh. "Ye have the youth, lad. I'll go below a while, so. If you want me you can call me."

I waited until he had settled down before I went out into the kitchen. The lamp was turned down low and the fire was dull. In the corner by the window Rita lay asleep, fully clothed. Katie was nodding in a chair beside Polly's bed. She started at my touch.

"Go and have a sleep, Katie," I told her. "I'll watch a while. We've finished upstairs for the present."

She made no protest, just squeezed my hand as she stood up, and rolled on to the mattress beside Rita. She was asleep almost at once.

I sat on the chair Katie had vacated, full of hopeless thoughts. But for the scarcely perceptible rise and fall of her breast, Polly seemed already dead. I found myself almost envying her the calm detachment of approaching death. Here was a mind oblivious to discouragement, discomfort, or fear. There was an aura of placid tranquillity about the

stilled features infinitely removed from my own anxieties and perplexities. Watching her, death did not seem so terrifying, and since this was the ultimate thing that could happen in our chain of misfortunes, I felt oddly consoled. But my anxieties for the others remained. In just a few hours the tide would be full again, and I did not quite know what to expect. Subconsciously, I suppose, I was beginning to accept the legend of the vanishing island. I was engaged in mentally formulating various tactical measures which might prove useful when the sea began to break over the house, when a knock sounded on the rear door again. This time I was neither startled nor alarmed. I had reached an emotional capacity and could no longer be concerned about anything. I unbolted the door to admit Lanadora.

Neither of the three unconscious women stirred as I shot the bolt again and returned to the chair beside Polly. Lanadora's startling beauty seemed to brighten the dull kitchen, and was at odds with the evidence of our squalor and misery around her. It was strange to think that although she was on the same island, she was completely detached from our crisis. I could not believe that she and those who were with her were in any way threatened or insecure. Having glanced around briefly she sat down facing me, her gloved hands on her knees and her luminous eyes on my face. I was immediately conscious of my lengthening stubble and unkempt hair. Then the humour of the incredible situation struck me and I could not help laughing.

"Well, Lanadora," I said, although I guessed she could not possibly understand what I was saying, "you certainly dropped in on a very desperate situation. Of all the places on earth you had to pick our little island. If I survive this—and at the moment that is a matter for conjecture—I will write about you. But the ironical thing about that is nobody would believe a word of it, and quite frankly I wouldn't blame them." I looked at her face, alive now with interest, as she listened. "You haven't the remotest idea of what I'm talking about," I continued, enjoying the one-sided conversation. "To you I am a strange bearded primitive creature from what you must consider the stone age—an inhabitant of a wild, storm-swept island. But really, in fairness to us, you must know that it is not always like this. The sun was shining when I first came here, and a lovelier place you could not find. That was a matter of only a few days ago. Now both myself and the others are isolated on this speck of land. Our position is precarious enough, but to deepen the pathos I will tell you that this aforementioned speck is liable to vanish at any moment." I was drunk with weariness, and felt that nothing of what I said made sense. "Yes, my dear, that is the dire prophecy about this doomed island. It's hard to believe, I know, but all sorts of magical

things happen in this land of fairies. In just about two hours from now I suspect the sea will rip our roof off and probably smash this house to rubble. As a remote stranger you should find the prospect interesting at least."

I brushed my hand over my burning eyes and found them sore to touch. When I looked up again I thought there was an expression of sympathy or concern on her face, while her eyes seemed larger and brighter than before.

"You are without a doubt," I said, recklessly, "the most beautiful woman I have ever seen in all my life. You would be a complete and absolute riot if you cared to stay down here on this planet. I swear that no man could resist you." I studied the soft curve of her seriously set lips, and for a mad moment wondered what she would do if I kissed them. She would probably reach for that mysterious holster of hers and blast me where I sat. The possibility did not distress me unduly. Such a kiss might be worth dying for. "Under other circumstances I could offer you something to eat, a little caviar, maybe, with champagne but as things stand I can only offer you my profound admiration." Her eyes were fastened on the signet ring I wore on the third finger of my right hand. It was of solid gold, and belonged to my father. I slipped it off my finger. The monogram on it was the same as my own. "This is a ring," I told her. "Would you care to see it?" I held it out to her and she took it between her thumb and index finger. "A ring may mean all sorts of things," I explained, "but more often than not it symbolises a pledged love." She looked up calmly, her face inscrutable. I took the ring from her gently and eased it over the gloved finger of her left hand. Our heads were close together when the operation was finished, and the faint perfume of her hair made me a little heady. On a sudden impulse I half-raised myself from the chair and kissed her gently on the mouth. As I drew back, tingling, as from an electric shock, I thought I saw the expression of her eyes change, but whether she was startled, shocked, or angry, I did not know, nor had I time to discover, for at that moment Polly groaned and asked for water.

During the next few moments I forgot Lanadora. I fetched the water from the drinking pail and propped Polly up in my arm. Her sunken lips sucked greedily at the cup as I held it for her.

"Maybe you'd like a drop in it, Polly," I suggested, not sure if she could hear me. She did not answer, and after a moment refused the cup, although she had taken but little. She leaned against my encircling arm and did not seem inclined to lie down again. Lanadora took the cup from my hand and placed it on the table. It was a surprising and friendly gesture. I said, "Thank you," aloud, and she inclined her head slightly.

Polly seemed to find great relief sitting in this upright position, and her breathing was easier. Although she did not look directly at me she knew who it was that held her, for once she said, "God bless you, Davy." Eventually she lay back on her pillows again and slipped away from us once more. I covered her with the bedclothes. By now the fire had burned down somewhat and I replenished it with peat. Then I went upstairs to find that several of the small receptacles had to be emptied through the window. When I returned to the kitchen Lanadora was still there, but no longer seated. She was examining the face of the clock on the mantelpiece. My signet ring made a bright band against the blackness of her glove.

I explained by gesture and demonstration how we measured time. I turned the hands of my wrist-watch to represent one hour and on my fingers counted twenty-four of these. Then with the help of a calendar and atlas I completed the lesson. I kept talking all the time, and now and then she repeated words I had said, and sometimes whole sentences, with astonishing accuracy. Nor was I in doubt as to whether she understood me. I was about to put the calendar away when she stopped me with a gesture and signalled in that voiceless telepathic way of hers which always produced an eerie sensation as if somebody was speaking inside my head.

Not that I heard anything, but a mental picture of what she wanted seemed to flash on my mind, momentarily suppressing all other pictures and thoughts. I found myself wondering if it were just a one-way system of communication, and had some misgivings about my earlier soliloquies, in case she may have interpreted their meaning by the simple expedient of reading my spoken thoughts. The message this time seemed to ask which figure on the calendar represented to-day. I turned the pages and pointed out the correct date. Immediately she rested her finger on the date following and pointed upwards. I did not need her silent telepathic tingle to realise she was departing the following day. This knowledge had a singularly depressing effect on me.

"A very wise decision," I said, bitterly. I tapped the figure she had indicated and pointed downwards. "By to-morrow it is possible that this house and all in it will be under the sea." Her look of alarm was the first indication I had that she gleaned some idea of what I was talking about, but I felt that my hand gestures had helped. "It would be nice if you could take us all with you, if not all the way then just across the Sound to the mainland—in fact, anywhere so long as it is off this chip of land."

She stared at me fixedly, and, as I met her eyes, she glanced fleetingly to where Rita and Katie slept in the shadowed corner, but there was no message from her in my mind, and she did not speak. Instead, she came to her feet and began moving silently about the kitchen, finding some-

thing of interest in everything she saw. Her inspection eventually brought her back to the dresser, where my uncovered typewriter stood among the plates. She looked at me enquiringly.

I named the machine, at the same time deliberately conjuring up a mental picture of the thing being operated and reproducing letters on paper. The effect of this effort was a small gesture of impatience, as though she were already familiar with the mechanics of the machine. I tried again.

"The machine is mine. I had hoped to write a book." This time she was genuinely puzzled. I repeated what I had said, but this time I thought of myself pounding on the keyboard, with a growing stack of typescript at my elbow, over which I merged a picture of a finished book.

This interpretation was naïve enough to cause her to laugh. A light tinkling laughter I was to remember for many a lonely day.

"No ordinary book," I said, my weariness forgotten in the wonder of her merry eyes. "This was going to be the key to a thousand years of peace." It was the first time since the beginning of the storm that I had recollected the original reason for my being on the island, and I felt suddenly bitter. "It outlined a plan for permanent peace in a world torn by wars, but it will never be finished now." I do not think at the time that she understood my words, but my bitterness must have been apparent. She brushed her fingers over the keys of the typewriter and turned away. For a moment she stood as if in deep meditation, turning the ring on her finger this way and that, then she moved to the rear door.

I opened it for her, but before she left she glanced from me to the ring.

"Good-night, Lanadora," I said, involuntarily.

I thought she murmured my name as she went into the night.

As I returned to the chair I realised that she had not offered to return my ring, and I felt a glow of pleasure. I thought of the warmth Lanadora's finger would impart to the metal and I thought of the unknown craftsman who had made the ring itself. He could never have dreamed how far the product of his skill would travel, and I felt highly amused when I considered that even if I met him I would not be able to tell him where the ring ended up, except that it was represented by a spot on the kitchen table two feet from a cheap atlas.

9

THE PROOF of the theory that the island was sinking seemed graphically demonstrated shortly after six o'clock that morning. The tide was full then, and, driven by a northerly gale, the sea threw great pillars of water over the cliff to crash on the roof of the house. With the exception of the children and Polly, everybody was pressed into action. Dan's two sons and Frankie Casey were upstairs dealing with the rain and sea water, which was coming through faster than they could take it away. Their footsteps splashed heavily over the kitchen and the living-room, knocking slight showers of plaster from the ceilings. Dan, unrefreshed after his short nap, and myself were occupied with preventing the water from coming under the doors to invade the living quarters from the hall and the rear door. Rita and Katie, their beads in their hands, provided spiritual as well as practical assistance.

The crisis lasted two hours, and then to our surprise, the rain stopped. By nine o'clock the wind had dropped to a stiff breeze. We had become so accustomed to the howling gale that this period of comparative quiet was incredible. We were more suspicious than relieved when we went out of doors to verify the miracle for ourselves. The sky was still leaden and low, and the mainland was just a dark mass through the haze over the sea, which was raging still like a great cauldron of boiling milk. After our long hours of confinement, the breeze was as invigorating as wine. We stood about, breathing it in, our spirits rising by the minute. Frankie Casey's waistcoat flapped wildly like stunted wings endeavouring to lift his great bulk off the ground. Dan's expression was inscrutable; he looked neither anxious nor relieved. Oweneen and Jackeen had accepted as a fact that the bad weather was permanently over, and they seemed vastly pleased. Rita Casey, who had not moved beyond the door, was watching her husband with shining eyes. Katie had remained with Polly and the children.

I was the first to see the strange craft. I had stepped out a bit to examine the roof—without success, for the ground sloped rapidly downwards towards the cliff—when I saw the great globular machine about one hundred yards below the house and a little to the rear. It was like a great shining fungus that had sprung up magically from the heather. It was more than twelve feet high and perhaps three times that diameter, reflecting the dull light on its polished surface. A haze of spindrift floating

between it and ourselves seemed to deepen the awesome mystery of its appearance.

My astonished expression brought the others to my side, and we formed a tight knot of stupefaction on the crown of the island.

"Merciful God!" said Dan, making four slow rolling syllables.

"That must be the yoke she came in," said Frankie.

"'Tis big enough, surely," said Oweneen. "Wait until they see this over from the mainland."

"I don't believe they can see it to-day," I said. "And it won't be here to-morrow." I told them then of Lanadora's visit during the night and how she had announced to me her imminent departure.

"I was wondering," Oweneen said wistfully, when I had finished, "if she would take any passengers with her."

His father looked at him swiftly, but for once made no caustic comment.

"The mystery is," said Frankie, as if Oweneen had not spoken, "why the thing came down here at all."

"I believe they had no option," I surmised. "It appears to me that they were very lucky this island was here, otherwise they might have landed in the sea."

As we watched, we saw the familiar figure of Lanadora come from behind the space ship. She saw us at once and walked deliberately through the heather towards us. I felt my heart beat faster at the memory of her lips on mine. It seemed now that I had known her all my life, but even then I did not suspect that the image of this girl from outer space was to haunt me for many a lonely day.

"Fine and bright she's looking this morning," commented Dan. He was watching me closely. "A fine slip of a girl entirely, with beauty to turn any man's heart to water."

Fine and bright indeed she certainly seemed, in contrast to her previous visits. While she was yet some distance away she lifted her hand in salutation, and was smiling when she joined us.

Oweneen was restless with excitement.

"Will ye ask her, Davy, if we can see the yoke yonder?"

The girl wore no cap to-day, and her short hair stirred around in the wind. For me she symbolised the freshness of the morning. Indeed, I had the illusion of a sudden brightness at her approach. She looked us over smilingly, and I thought that for a moment her eyes held mine with a wistful intimacy. I noticed that she still wore my ring.

I smiled back at her, and nodding towards the strange craft, concentrated on it in flight from the island.

"I was telling them you were going away soon."

I indicated the ship again. "Could we inspect your space craft?"

She thought for a moment, and then shook her head regretfully.

Oweneen, whose soul was in a pair of wide adoring eyes, turned to me. "Will you ask her if she would take some of us to wherever she is going?"

Again Dan looked at him sharply, opened his mouth to say something, but evidently thought better of it.

"You're joking, surely?" I asked the young man, my eyes on his father.

Oweneen shook his head. "Jackeen and I have been talking this over. As true as God is to be my Judge, we'd take a chance this very minute—that is—" he paused and looked sheepishly at his father—"if you say it's all right, father."

"After all," said Jackeen, speaking for the first time, "what is there here for us only a home on a shifting rock and a poor living on the sea, and no prospect of marriage or money or future. Sure we may as well go as stay here to rot in the rain and die old men before we have a chance to live."

"How will you know it won't be from the fire into the frying pan," I asked them, "even if by a miracle the girl should consent to take you?"

"If she's an example of the people there," said Oweneen, "it'll be like heaven, surely."

"I'm afraid I wouldn't know how to ask her," I began to explain, when Dan exploded:

"Ask her!"

"But——"

"It won't do any harm. And 'tis a fair question."

I shrugged, and turned to Lanadora. How much she understood of the conversation I did not know, but she seemed amused at the fervour of the youths. Because I was very interested in her reaction to Oweneen's request and also to ensure that she would not misunderstand, I was very careful about communicating that question to her. I pointed to Dan's sons, then to herself and the space craft, and mentally concentrated on all four leaving the island together.

Even before I was finished her eyes had widened with surprise. Instantly I had the impression that she was checking my question. Pronouncing the youths' names with astounding accuracy, she waved her hand to the ship and swept it over her and upwards in a gesture depicting rapid flight.

"Yes!" I cried aloud. "They want to know if you will take them with you wherever you come from." Even now I was more interested in her reactions than in her answer. In fact my imagination boggled at the picture of these two young men leaving their island home for a distant

and unknown destination in the sky. I think we must all have held our breath while she considered her answer. She looked fixedly at Dan's sons, then, lifting her shoulders, slightly turned away. I had the impression that she was not very certain of herself. It was neither refusal nor acceptance. There was no clue to her thoughts in my mind as we watched her walk towards the space ship and disappear around the side of it.

Oweneen clutched me by the arm, his eyes fever-bright.

"What did she say?"

"I don't know," I told him, truthfully. "I don't believe she made any direct answer."

"She didn't say no."

"Nor did she say yes," I reminded him. "We'll only have to wait and see."

Frankie Casey brushed his damp moustache. "I got the idea she must ask somebody else."

"That was my own impression," I told them.

Dan cleared his throat. "I'll give that young lady credit for more sense," he said. "She'll know two numbskulls when she sees them." He looked at his sons with withering scorn. "A lot of bloody use the two of ye would be on the moon." Then he tramped off towards the house.

Frankie Casey eyed the lads with unusual severity.

"God give ye sense," he said, and it did not sound like a prayer. "Have ye any thought for himself, a man who was father and mother to ye? Would you leave him desolate now when he has neither chick nor child nor a roof over his head? If ye want to go away what's wrong with America or Canada, or England for that matter, where ye could earn enough to keep him in comfort in his old age? But no—them places are too close at hand. Nothing nearer than a star will do ye. 'Tis a pity ye're not there now crying your eyes out to come home to the bit of rock that was good enough for yer grandfather and yer father, but not good enough for me two young cocks!"

Oweneen and his brother said nothing, just studied with great intensity the heather at their feet. They were neither crestfallen nor ashamed, but an innate respect for their elders did not permit the smallest retort. Yet Frankie waited, as though expecting one, and not receiving any, followed Dan indoors, leaving the three of us alone.

After a moment of indecision, Oweneen looked up uncertainly. His fresh face was round and appealing.

"I suppose you think we're daft, Davy?"

I studied the two eager faces. The thought struck me that such expressions must have been worn by the early intrepid men who first looked beyond the rim of unknown horizons.

"No, Oweneen, I don't think you are daft, but I doubt very much if either of you will be taken anywhere. Even if the girl were willing, I think it would be foolhardy to go to a place of which you know absolutely nothing, especially since there would be little prospect of you returning if you changed your mind."

"Look!" said Jackeen, taking in the boiling sea and lowering sky with a sweep of his hand. "It could be no worse than here."

"You are referring to conditions of climate," I reminded him. "There are more important conditions than weather conditions. Little considerations of social existence, of legislature or laws, if you like, that imprison the mind."

Jackeen nodded towards the space ship. "She's no slave."

"Maybe not," I agreed. "But is she a typical citizen? I'd imagine that not all of her race would be privileged to make such a journey. She may represent one stratum of the social life in whatever world she comes from. There may be the other extreme. You have no way of knowing the conditions that await you there. A decision to go with her—to change worlds, in fact—is so irrevocable that no amount of thought on it could be considered too great. . . . Besides, both of you are very young."

Oweneen had listened to me with the greatest of attention, but when I had finished I felt I had made little impression on his resolve.

"Jackeen and myself have thought about it, and we realise that 'tis a very serious business altogether. In fact, a man could think about this for ever. But if you want to get anywhere there must be an end to thinking some time, and there must be a yes or a no. Well, we'd like to go." He lifted his head suddenly and turned away, a dream in his eyes and the wind in his hair. Already there seemed about him an air of irrepressible speed.

"In any case," supplemented his brother, "suppose when we did reach this place, we found things were even worse than here, it would make no difference in the long run. We'll die there just as sure as in this place. Life in this world or any other world will go like that——" he snapped his fingers. "But we'd have reached for the stars, anyway, and would see things that nobody else on this earth would have seen, and I believe that would be something worth suffering or even dying for. Far better, anyway, than wasting the years and waiting for eternity."

Oweneen had fixed shining eyes on his brother, and he turned a triumphant expression on me, as much as to say that there was an argument to end all arguments.

"That's the whole thing in a nutshell," he said, "and I couldn't have said it better myself."

I felt incapable of arguing further, nor did I have any sense of defeat.

Indeed, the pioneering spirit so clearly demonstrated by these young men was stimulating and exciting. Very weakly I proffered my last effort to dissuade them.

"There's your father?"

Oweneen thought a moment, his face softening.

"Ah, surely there is. We thought about him, too, and we are hoping he will come with us. But he won't stand in our way. If he don't come, sure, after all, we'd only be parted for a small while."

For a moment I thought that Oweneen did not realise the implications of their decision to go with the space ship.

"There will be no coming back, Oweneen," I told him, urgently. "You will probably never see your father again."

Both of them looked at me in surprise. "We mightn't see him in this life," said Jackeen, "but we'll see him in the next."

Once more I was face to face with the dual existence of these islanders, who always seemed to have one leg in this life and the other in Eternity.

"He'll have wings then," said Oweneen, smiling.

"Stoking he'll be, surely," offered Jackeen.

Both of them laughed, and, watching them, I felt suddenly envious and very old.

10

THE WEATHER grew a little brighter towards noon and the curtain of cloud lifted sufficiently high off the sea to permit a glimpse of the mainland. It was just a vague dark shadow, fringed with the boiling Sound, but its appearance was heartening, and our spirits rose by the minute. None of us doubted that the worst was over and that all we had to do was to wait until the sea subsided to have the comfort and assistance of our friends across the way. Katie believed it possible for Polly to have the consolation of the last rites of the Church, although the others did not share her hopes in this respect. The old woman was sinking fast, and it was clear that her death was a matter of hours.

"If it cleared another small bit," Katie surmised, "we could signal for Father Daly."

"I suppose he'd swim across," said Dan, sarcastically. "For the love of God have sense, girl! It'll be another two or three days at least before a boat could live in that sea."

"Even so," Katie persisted, "Father Daly would do it for Polly."

"He might try at that," agreed Dan, "and I wouldn't want his death on my hands."

We were gathered in the kitchen after the midday meal, having consolidated our position somewhat by replenishing our fuel supply from the heart of the sodden stock outside and effecting what repairs we could do to the roof. None of us had broached the subject of Oweneen and Jackeen's decision, although it must have been uppermost in all our minds. The two young men were inseparable and held a continuous whispered conversation. I noted that Dan viewed them from time to time with growing impatience, and it seemed that an eruption was inevitable. It came immediately after the discussion on sending a signal for Father Daly.

"Isn't it strange," said Dan, glowering at his sons, "that one good man would risk his life to get on to this island while two nineens would do the same thing to get off it."

The brothers broke off a whispered conversation.

"I'm talking to the two of ye," thundered their father. "Yer sitting around there all day like two old hens cackling, and bloody fantastic notions in yer heads."

It was remarkable how much the brothers resembled each other in their astonishment. The rest of us said nothing, realising that this issue between father and sons was inevitable and had to be resolved some time. The boys, however, seemed in no hurry to join the issue. They simply stared at their parent until he erupted again.

"D'ye hear me talking to ye?"

"Well," said Oweneen, squaring his shoulders, his round face suddenly solemn, "'tisn't that we want to be rid of ye at all. 'Tis just that we want to live for a change. Look at the two of us, will ye, father——" He drew attention to himself and his brother with a dramatic sweep of his hand. "We've never even been beyond Dunfoy. We've seen nothing. How other people live and what they do is something we know nothing about. Now there is a chance to see strange people and strange places, and myself and Jackeen are game for it." He brushed the back of his big hand over his forehead. "In the long run it won't make much of a difference where we are, since we must all go the one way home. But we're not foolish enough to think that it's all sealed and signed and that we are going to go. We're only saying that if we get the chance we would go like a shot. In fact, if the chance is there I think we should all go. We'd all be together then. 'Twould be a new life for us all." His voice was suddenly passionate. "God Almighty, father, it's only half an existence here, and ye all know that better than me because you've lived with it longer. So I say let's all go if we can."

Dan had not attempted to interrupt his son, and under other circumstances his expression would be comical, so astounded did he look. It must have been the first time that one of his sons contested any issue with him. As for the rest of the company, Katie and Rita shared a common expression of horror, Frankie Casey looked stoically at the fire, while the children playing under the table were unaware of the crisis that had grown around them like an electric storm. For myself, I felt a growing admiration for Oweneen. The boy had spirit and courage. I thought it a pity that he and his brother could not go to their star, for I felt even then that Lanadora would be bound to decline their request.

Dan took quite a few minutes to collect his thoughts, and very uncertain thoughts they must have been, for he attempted to give them utterance several times before any coherent sounds emerged. It was to Frankie Casey that he addressed his first coherent remarks.

"Did ye ever hear anything like that in all yer born days?"

Frankie did not look up. "They're not too big yet to have their ears reddened."

"No, Frankie," said Dan, "that's no good any more. They're men now, and they should have sense enough to know their own minds. It boils down to this, that they're not happy here and never will be again as long as this canker is in them. If it isn't the moon it'll be some place else." He looked at the boys, his expression somewhat softer. "Maybe there is a deal of sense in what they are doing. Life is not easy here, nor is it comfortable living in the teeth of the wind and the crest of the wave, but this is the only life we know. Maybe in your place I would want to do the self-same thing as ye, but I am set in my ways and at an age that hates change. But ye are young and free men." His voice was suddenly appealing. "The thing that bothers me is not that ye want to go but that ye don't know where ye are going. For God knows ye are still my sons, and your happiness is of concern to me." He looked at me with tragic eyes. "Did she say she'd take them?"

"She didn't say so."

"Did she refuse?"

"She didn't say anything at all. I don't even know if she understood."

"Is there any way we can find out what her country is like—or her world, wherever it is? Is it better or worse than our own?"

"I don't know if I can find out these things," I replied, "but I could try, and even if I got an answer I wouldn't be quite sure of what she was trying to tell me. I doubt very much if there is a chance of the boys going, but if there is, it must be taken on the assumption that not only is the trip itself a gamble, but also the manner of life they find at the end of their journey."

"D'ye think they're daft?" asked Dan, seriously.

I looked at him steadily. "I do not."

"I was thinking you wouldn't," said Dan, and I thought that for a moment his eyes strayed to my ringless hand. "Would you go if you could?"

"I would, if it were possible," I replied, without hesitation, "but I can't. If this were six or even three months from now I'd be more anxious to go than Oweneen and Jackeen here. But I have been set a task that I must fulfil before I go anywhere else."

I could see that he had a mind to ask me what that task was, and I told them that in my capacity as mercenary soldier I had seen man turned to beast. I had seen others, shining spirits by comparison, snuffed out as a candle is snuffed out. I had seen death come from the sea and the sky and from the earth, and had steeled myself to it. But like my father I had been haunted by the helpless, hopeless, tragically mature faces of very young children, hungry, desolate and forgotten in a world gone mad. And I believed that my father had devised a plan that would make war an impossibility. That plan he not only imparted to me but charged me to set it down on paper. Before I could go anywhere, his formula for a thousand years of peace must be written down and bequeathed to a sick world.

All this I told them, feeling their eyes on my face and their sympathy reach out and warm me. When I finished, Katie picked up the poker and prodded a hole in the red-hot peat.

"It'll have God's blessing," she said.

"Or nothing will," supplemented Rita.

Women alone, I thought, held the secret of peace in their motherly hearts. . . .

By late afternoon it became apparent to us that the clearance of the weather was but a temporary prelude to a continuation of the storm. The mainland disappeared again, and the wind lifted in recurring gusts, until at dusk it blew with steady savagery over our heads. It did not quite kill our rising hopes, for the rain still held off.

After supper we sat around the stove listening uneasily to the strengthening wind. The children had been put to bed, but none of us felt like retiring. We were like the remnants of a besieged garrison awaiting the final assault. Whether the lull of the morning had dulled our memories of the wind or whether the renewed onslaught was stronger than before, was at the start difficult to tell, but after a few hours we were in no doubt that this time the storm was coming from the north with unprecedented fury. It literally shrieked at us through every cranny and crack. The rush

and wrench of it was everywhere, and it seemed that it must slowly pull the house to pieces.

"I'm sure this is the night," said Katie, suddenly, from the depths of the silence that gripped us, and it was strange that I was the only one who did not understand her meaning.

"It could well be," said Frankie Casey, absently, and Rita, seated beside him with her inevitable knitting needles, moaned slowly and leaned her head against his shoulder. Instinctively his big arm encircled her: "Sure, what am I sayin', we've had worse than this in days gone by." He looked across at Dan: "Hadn't we, Dan?"

The lobster man took his pipe from his mouth and studied the blackened bowl. "I suppose we had at that, Frankie, but 'tis the way I've forgotten it."

"A poor memory you always had," retorted Casey, a little warmly. "The worst is over us now. If the rain holds off we'll be all right, and this will blow itself out before morning."

"If the island don't sink to-night," said Katie, as if speaking out of a trance, "it'll stay on top of the sea for ever."

Dan nodded across at her. "It don't have to sink to finish us. By now there's not a slate left in the roof, I'd say, and there's a deluge in that wind, or else I'm deaf. Besides that, in an hour or so it'll be high tide again." He met Frankie's furious gaze calmly. "'Tis best they know, Frankie. 'Tis a bad time to be softening blows."

Rita sobbed again, and then in a broken voice: "Although 'twas better to-day, I knew deep down in my heart that it would come to this. I could feel the island sinking."

"And I never knew Polly to be wrong in a prophecy." Katie's voice held the same monotonous lifelessness. "There's only one of us to see the end of this."

In spite of the glowing stove the kitchen seemed suddenly chilled. Even Oweneen and Jackeen, buoyed up a moment before by the prospect of leaving the island, were now pale and anxious.

"Mother of God!" said Oweneen, suddenly, "wouldn't it be just our luck to have the island go down before to-morrow."

His brother said nothing, but Dan lifted his chin like a stag scenting the wind. "So 'tis yourself you're thinkin' of, Oweneen. No thought of what might happen to other people, as long as you can shift your backside to some five-pointed star."

Oweneen coloured. "'Tisn't that at all, father——" Then, realising that no explanation would be adequate, he lifted his broad shoulders: "I suppose I spoke out of turn."

But I was very thankful he had spoken, for he had inadvertently

planted a thought in my mind that instantly germinated and grew. Before that moment I admit I was infected by their superstition even to the point of believing that the island was settling in the sea. Perhaps it was the strain of the past days or the gentle infection of their talk, but to me the hurtling wind outside meant tragedy for all as surely as though we were awaiting a direct hit from a high-explosive bomb. Polly's prophecy was starkly fixed in my mind, and I resented it bitterly. It was the only unkind thought I had about the dying woman. If she had foreseen the deaths of all but one of the present company she should have told them about it while they had a chance to leave the island the night Cathal O'Riain left for the mainland. Or else if she thought the events of her dream were immutable, she should have remained silent. From the little that I had learned about Polly I knew that she was wise and good and that the well-being and happiness of those people who remained of her small realm would be of great concern to her. For this reason I could not reconcile her past reputation with the frightful torture of her prophecy—unless—and this was the thought that had fired my brain—unless it had some interpretation other than the one we had put on it. That such might be the case I never considered until Oweneen spoke.

"You're wrong about Polly's prophecy, Katie," I said, speaking involuntarily.

In an instant every eye was turned on me. Katie looked as if I had struck her across the face. I turned to Dan and Casey.

"You two were there when she made her prophecy. What did she say?"

"I'd hardly be mistaken about it," said Dan.

I felt a growing sense of impatience. "I'm not saying you would. I'm asking you what she said that first night?"

Frankie and himself exchanged a puzzled glance before he answered me. "She told Cathal O'Riain not to tarry and that she didn't see him in her dream and that he had his own life to live. Then she said to Frankie here that the storm would last a week and many a long week and only one of us would see the end of it."

"That's what she said," agreed Frankie, "and she said, too, that we'd never see the likes o' this."

"That's correct," I said. "I heard her, too. Now, what way did you interpret her prophecy?"

"Sure it only has one meanin'," said Dan. "You wouldn't want much sense——"

"How long have you known Polly?" I interrupted him.

Dan was growing impatient now. "All my life, man and boy."

"What kind of a woman was she?" I was speaking of her as though she were already dead.

Dan's swift impatient glance drew the attention of the company to my foolishness. However, he decided to humour me.

"She was a queen in every way."

"Have you ever known her to harm anybody?"

"Never a solitary soul."

"Did she ever speak evil of anybody?"

"Only when evil walked on two legs," said Dan.

"Was she the kind of person that would cause unnecessary pain?"

"She only eased pain," said Dan.

"Then she must have been a pretty wonderful person," I said.

Dan nodded his head. "She was all that."

"Then if she was all that," I concluded, "there must be some other meaning to her prophecy."

A hurricane gust of wind at the window dramatically punctuated my sentence.

If I had committed sacrilege the eyes turned on me could not have been more outraged.

"Examine it yourselves," I invited them. "If Polly had seen our deaths in a dream do you think she would have deliberately kept silent until Cathal O'Riain's boat was gone and it was too late to shift even the children to the safety of the mainland? Was Polly the type of person who would doom her own people when they could be saved?"

They stared at me in stunned silence, the outrage draining from their faces as my words sank home.

"She wasn't that type of woman at all," said Dan, after a moment.

"I believe that," I agreed. "Therefore there must be some other meaning to her prophecy, and I think I know what it is." As I looked at the tense faces around me I did not know for sure whether or not I believed what I was about to say. "I feel now that I am the one to see the end of this crisis here, but not for a moment do I see your deaths in the picture."

"Where are we, then?" asked Casey, as though I held a crystal ball in my hand.

I met the eyes of each of them, feeling my spine tingle with emotion.

"I believe you are gone with Oweneen and Jackeen with that girl outside."

My theory fell among them like a paralysing electric shock. Nobody moved while the echo of my words hung in the air. Then:

"I can just see myself," said Frankie, with a short, unconvincing laugh.

Nobody else joined in his laughter. Surprisingly, Oweneen and Jackeen said nothing at all. At length Dan breathed deeply: "There might be

something in what you say about us putting the wrong meaning on Polly's words, but again there might be a third meaning."

"There might be," I conceded, "but I can't see it."

"No more than I can see myself flying through space," said Frankie.

Dan turned on him at once. "You might have no choice, Frankie."

Neither of the women said a word, and Jackeen and Oweneen were looking at their father as if they were beholding a god.

II

IN THE solitude of my island home I have often wondered which of several factors was most influential in the fateful decisions made on that particular night. It could well be that fear, coupled with superstition, was the main motivating force. But then it could have been the same adventurous curiosity which certainly animated Jackeen and Oweneen, or it might be the beauty and magical charm of Lanadora that drew the islanders away from familiar things, however insecure, and launched them on the vastness of the unknown. Perhaps I would be accurate in saying that it was a combination of all these things. Of one thing only was I certain—Dan O'Leary's sons were alone in their enthusiasm for a space journey before the rain came.

But I am a little ahead of myself, for immediately after I had proffered my theory concerning Polly's prophecy, Lanadora joined our company. Oweneen let her in. Indeed, he had bounded from his chair for that privilege. This time she wore a cloak of the same material as her tightly-fitting costume, and was braced by a complicated harness of straps encircling her waist and passing between and under her breasts. Once again she wore her woollen cap. She seemed surprised to find that Oweneen had admitted her, and her eyes swept the company until they met mine. Then she gave a little intimate smile that set my heart pounding. On her way around the table she paused at Polly's bed and looked for a few moments on the livid face. I placed a chair for her, but with a gesture she indicated that she would prefer to stand. There was an air of urgency about her to-night, as if seconds were precious.

Once again in the same manner she had used that afternoon, she announced her imminent departure. Then she pointed to Oweneen and Jackeen.

"She's willing to take the two boys, Dan," I translated, unnecessarily.

Dan said nothing for a moment, then he slowly came to his feet and faced his two sons, while a sudden silence enveloped us.

"My only concern is for your happiness, lads, but ye've backed me into a corner. If I don't let ye go, ye'll be eating your hearts out for the rest of your lives and be no good for anyone. On the other hand, if ye go, ye are lost to me and to all you've known here for as long as ye live. 'Tis for yourselves alone to decide, and that's the sad thing about it, because there's not a decent head between the two of ye."

The two boys exchanged a glance, and I could see that in this fateful moment they had not been shaken in their resolve to go. No words were exchanged by them, but I had a feeling that a deep tacit message passed between them. Oweneen seemed elected spokesman. He bowed stiffly and awkwardly to Lanadora.

"We'll go with you, ma'am, and be very thankful." He made to shake her hand, thought better of it, and finally hid it behind his back. Then he faced his father.

"There's one thing Jackeen and me would like, father. We'd like you to come with us."

"I know ye would," said Dan, "but as I told ye before, I'm too old."

"Not in years, father," said Oweneen, his face a round circle of appeal. "'Tis the hard life on this island has made you old-looking. Away from it you'd be as spry as a boy. Yerra, what's in it anyway, but a span of time? The important thing is that we'd be together, and you'd have somebody to look after you twenty years from now, when your strength is gone and ye need looking after."

Dan made an unsuccessful attempt to hide his emotion. His Adam's apple leaped once as he swallowed.

"Will ye listen to head o' knowledge talking about taking care of me," he appealed to us. "He'll be put to the pin of his collar to take care of himself."

Jackeen spoke across to me. "Would ye ask her if she'd take me father too, Davy?"

Dan's eyes met mine, and I thought he was beginning a negative shake of his head, when the house seemed to tremble under the impact of a hurricane gust, and with it came the rain, careening suddenly against the glass like pebbles, and continuing loud and sustained like the roll of countless drums. For that moment the storm dominated our thoughts, overriding our personal problems, decisions and perplexities with its utter savagery. I saw Lanadora glance upwards, apprehension in her eyes, and at that moment the children in the other room began to shriek in terror.

Rita and Frankie raced across the kitchen and out into the hall, leaving the door gaping to breathe upon us the strong chill breath of the storm. Katie stood pale and rigid, with both hands on the mantelpiece, as

though to steady it. The Caseys returned almost at once, bringing the terrified children with them.

"The rain's coming through the ceiling inside," Frankie announced, "and one more thing"—he set the children he carried on the floor—"the sea is knocking on the door. There's inches of water in the hall."

" 'Twould be about time now for it," said Dan, soberly. "The tide is high."

"Not for an hour yet," said Casey.

The leaping flame of the oil lamp accentuated the hollows of Dan's bearded cheeks. " 'Tis backed by a strong wind, too."

"Ay," agreed Frankie, "but there's more than the wind in it. The island is going down. Did ye not feel the house keel over that time?"

Panic was written in the white faces of the women and whimpering children.

"It was only the first shock of the rain," I said, to steady them.

Frankie's eyes were wide. "The first shock?" he said. "The first of many shocks."

As if to substantiate his words, a terrific blast of wind gripped us, there was a sudden sense of pressure, and the open kitchen door slammed shut like a pistol shot. Katie moaned, and put a hand to the guttering oil lamp. Rita, on her knees, had managed to enclose all her children in her embrace. I found Lanadora's eyes on me. In the dark luminous depths of them there seemed to be a world of compassion for our plight. She indicated the entire company with a gesture, and pointed upwards.

"You can all go now," I told them, with growing excitement. "She is willing to take you all if you are willing to go."

Nobody moved for a fraction of a second, and in that short time I saw Frankie Casey question his wife with his eyes and Dan look at his sons. Katie turned her eyes fleetingly on Polly, as forgotten up to this as though she were already dead and buried.

Rita gazed up at me from her knees. "What is it like up there?"

I was tempted to reassure her there and then, but that would burden me with the responsibility of their decision. I directed her question to Lanadora.

"Your world," I said, pointing upwards, "what is it like?" I thought of trees and rivers and cities such as I knew them.

She nodded her head immediately and said something I did not understand, but I had a mental picture of snow-white buildings, tall and graceful, and the broad sweep of great rivers fringed with verdant green.

"Her world doesn't seem very different to ours," I told them. Then a thought struck me. I concentrated my thoughts on the havoc of total warfare. "Are there wars on your planet?"

"No wars," she said in English, with surprising clarity.

"Then it must be heaven," said Katie.

Dan gripped my arm. "What do you think, Davy?"

"About what?"

"About all of us going?"

"It seems a safe bet, Dan. To remain would be risky for all of us."

"I don't want to lose my sons," said Dan, almost fiercely.

"Nor me the children," said Rita.

"Then you'll need somebody to take care of you and them," said Frankie, solemnly.

I glanced at Katie, and she half-smiled.

"I should have more sense at my age. I'd like to go to keep house for you, Davy, but what about the poor creature there in the bed? Somebody must stay here."

So completely had we forgotten the dying woman that we stared at her now as though she were a sudden intruder. The marble white figure was unconscious of the storm of elements and human decisions that raged around her.

"The poor lamb is nearly gone from us," said Katie.

I knew then what I had to do and say.

"Well, Katie, Frankie and his family belong together, and so do Dan and his boys. That leaves only you and me. For myself, even if I wanted to go—even if Polly were dead and buried—I would have to remain here, so I'll stay with Polly."

I think it was then I knew positively that Lanadora could understand everything I said. I heard the sharp intake of her breath and found her wide eyes turned on me in dismay. I believe that my father's task alone could not have held me then, but coupled with the fate of two women, one solitary and one dying, I was strong enough to stifle my own desire.

"There is work I am pledged to finish," I said to Lanadora, feeling that to her alone the explanation was due.

"You'll be kilt if you stay," said Katie.

"No I won't," I assured her. "Remember the prophecy, one to see the end of the crisis—I seemed to have known from the start that it must be me."

"If you don't go, none of us will," said Dan, suddenly.

"Have you forgotten what Polly said, Dan?" I asked him. "You can't escape your destiny. A new world—that's your destiny—the first pilgrims to another planet. To write a formula for peace—that's my destiny, and who knows, we may meet again."

Neither Dan nor Katie said anything more, but I could see the slow tears in her eyes. On an impulse I took Lanadora's hand. It was warm

beneath the material of her glove. My ring still encircled her finger. "My father's pledge holds me here, Lanadora. Whatever your world is like it will be all the richer for having taken these people. Treat them well." As I was speaking I was conscious of her great eyes, still darkly tragic, and the soft contour of cheeks and lips. With an effort I fought down an impulse to take her in my arms. A sense of irretrievable loss weighed heavily upon me.

"In the name of God," I beseeched them, "if you're going, go quickly."

12

THE FAREWELLS of that night were among the most poignant and heart-searing of my life. I had known these people but a few weeks, yet it seemed to me that they had always been an integral part of my life and closer to me than any other humans I had known, with the solitary exception of my father. His way of life, and consequently mine, had been such that our own companionship sufficed. We made no lasting friendships or alliances. Indeed, I believe now that my parent's Quixotic efforts at rectifying the ills of the world by taking up arms for the underdog earned for him and me more contempt than affection, and brought both of us a full share of hard blows. These simple island people of Innishios were the first real friends I had ever known. They had accepted me without question and made me one of their own, and I may as well say it now—although I have known many women, mostly the tragic, pitiful, parasitical shoots that spring up in the wake of the shears of war, the night I kissed Lanadora was the first selfless salute I had given to any woman. All I wanted, perhaps without quite knowing it, was peace, companionship, and the love of a woman I had found on this speck of land, and now it was all to be taken away.

Before they left that night, each of the islanders made some form of will, bequeathing their pitifully small possessions to relatives and friends. I put all their effects into separate envelopes and placed them in Dan's strongbox; their last link with the world was severed.

Only fragmentary pieces of our mumbled good-byes remain with me now, halting and scarcely articulate but deeply moving, given against the dramatic background of the most terrifying gale I had ever known.

Rita, preoccupied with preparing her children for their great adventure, found time to cry over my hand. Frankie Casey, a little awed and uncertain under the tremendous weight of his responsibility, squeezed into my arm a wealth of affection. Oweneen and Jackeen constantly lamented

my decision to stay, but were at the same time elated and excited at the prospect of plunging into space. They were very young. Dan O'Leary's "We'll miss you, Davy," almost unmanned me by its genuine warmth. In all my life I had never been missed before.

"I'm sorry I cannot come, Dan."

"I know that, Davy. You've set yourself a task, and 'tis your nature to abide by a promise given, but isn't it strange now the feeling is on me that we will meet again."

For a fleeting moment, as I looked into his moist eyes, I had a similar conviction.

"I'll pray for that, Dan," said I, who had never prayed in my life.

Katie cried unashamed, and clung to me. All I could understand of her tearful parting was the conviction that I would surely be killed, and her thoughtful consideration for Polly. . . . "If the weather gets better and by some miracle the both of ye are alive, try to get a priest for Polly. . . ."

And so they left me, moving into the tortured night. Significantly, they went in groups: first Dan and his sons, then Frankie Casey and his little clan, and finally, Katie, looking tall and tragic in her black shawl. Lanadora preceded them, without a backward glance at me, and I was left alone with a dying woman, in a trembling house. Listlessly I moved around the kitchen, not yet fully conscious of my loss, but with an empty pain in my heart, as though I were suddenly bereaved, just as on that day—so long ago now—when I held my father's shattered body in my arms and knew that he was dead. My boots splashed in the water that was invading the kitchen from the hall. I touched the pathetic wisps of curtaining at the window, unmindful now of the vicious tattoo of rain outside. I turned up the wick of the oil lamp slightly to dispel the shadows, and unconsciously wound the little clock on the mantelpiece. Its measured tick seemed extraordinarily amplified and insistent, even above the screaming wind. It seemed to suggest that Time would assuage all things. I adjusted the damper of the stove and replenished it with peat. Finally, I ended up beside Polly's bed. Once more I found myself morbidly envying her, her detachment from all things. The greying face was strangely calm and serene, the wrinkles seemed entirely smoothed out, and the countenance held a solemn dignity. Both her hands were outside the bedclothes, her fingers entwined in each other and in a rosary. Polly seemed to be praying to her God with all the calm confidence of a saint. She seemed to have grown taller, too, for the twin mound made by her feet was surprisingly low down in the bed. Death was beginning to rejuvenate this queenly woman. I felt a strange comfort in her presence. As long as she breathed, I thought, I was not entirely

solitary. There was nothing I could do for her except wait. I thought of Katie's instructions concerning the priest. It seemed to matter very little. My own conception of God could not or would not find a blemish on the soul of this woman. If heaven were denied her, then surely it would be denied all souls.

I was still standing beside Polly when a loud rapping sounded on the door. I knew at once who it would be even before I withdrew the bolt to admit Lanadora. The rain glistened on her clothing and clung to her face. I refastened the door, and then, even as I turned around, we were locked in each other's arms, her lips seeking and holding mine and our bodies crushed together. How long we stood like that I will never know, but it seemed that this moment was the thrilling reality, and all other things, the storm, the islanders, the uncertainty, had never been. I discovered that Lanadora was not the ethereal, mysterious visitor from the unknown, but a warm, vibrant woman, loving, and—have I not said it before—beloved. In that moment, too, my father's task appeared monstrously unreasonable. I would freely have ignored it, and gladly left the world without his peace formula, but over Lanadora's shoulder I could see the colourless face of Polly, and I knew I could never leave her to die alone.

At length very gently I released Lanadora's arms from around my neck. Tears had merged with the rain on her face and cheeks, and a spot on one of them showed red from my beard. She never looked more beautiful. I lifted one of her gloved hands and kissed her finger.

"I love you, Lanadora, and I always will, no matter where you are. I'd go with you now, but I am pledged to complete a task." As I spoke, her eyes caressed my face. "One thing I promise you. From now on this island is my home. Even if only a fraction of it remains above the sea, I will always stay here and wait, because some day you may come back. I don't care how long I have to wait, so long as you will come."

Long before I had finished she was nodding her head. Then suddenly she crossed to my books, and taking the atlas, opened it on the table. The page was the one we had studied on the night of her first visit. She drew her finger sharply away from the circle representing our earth, but instead of moving it the full distance of two feet, as on her previous demonstration, she travelled a little more than three inches. Then she drew her finger back to our earth again.

My heart pounded with excitement. "Do you mean that you are just travelling as far as there and returning to earth again?"

She nodded happily, her eyes shining through her unshed tears. She repeated the motion as before, only this time when she reached the earth again she pointed to me, and then moved her finger away, stopping

again briefly at the outer position before continuing on to the spot she had previously indicated as the location of her world. Her diagrams were mere secondary assistances to the flow of thoughts which she passed into my mind. It was clear that the shorter journey was to effect a rendezvous with something else, either a bigger craft or perhaps a space station or a planet. From there she would return for me, and then both of us would proceed to her distant home.

I fetched the calendar and flicked the pages to the present month. "How long to your home?" I asked her, hoping she had not forgotten the lesson I had given her on the calendar.

She thought a long time, her eyes fixed on the atlas, then ignoring the calendar, she pointed to the elliptical line of the earth's path and followed it for half its complete distance, which measured exactly six months.

She studied my face anxiously while she questioned if I had understood.

"I'll be waiting for you," I assured her, "counting the minutes."

At the door I kissed her again and released her swiftly. I was vividly conscious of her misted eyes, and then she was gone, merging so swiftly with the darkness outside that it seemed she had literally vanished into thin air. Oddly, the last thing I glimpsed was my gold signet ring. A speck of gold in the darkness. It seemed a happy omen.

I never will be able to explain the absolute conviction I had that I would meet Lanadora again. It was a somewhat similar instinct which I had about Dan O'Leary, but much stronger. My loneliness and depression dropped from me. I was filled with a determined resolve to fight back against the storm that was threatening to destroy me. The water on the floor of the kitchen suddenly became a reproach to my indolence, the leaking ceiling a rebuke for my lack of vigilance. Deliberately I closed my mind to whatever might be happening to my friends outside as a falling drop of rainwater drew for a fraction of a second a silver line from the ceiling to the foot of Polly's bed. At once I moved the bed a foot or so towards the stove, finding great relief in practical action. I had scarcely finished when I became conscious of the same thin, high-pitched whine we had heard on the first night of Lanadora's arrival, only this time it grew more and more intense, creating an almost unbearable tingle in my ears. Then, quite suddenly, the black window of the kitchen became a fiery scarlet, so bright that I had the frightening impression of being in the centre of a raging cauldron of flame. Every object in the kitchen was touched with fire. The pale flame of the oil lamp disappeared as though it had been extinguished, and then the light from outside was gone, leaving me blinded and dazed.

Slowly my vision returned, and I beheld the drab yellow familiarity of the kitchen. Only a shadow of the flaming window was retained in the retina of my eyes. Then, behind me, Polly coughed once, and spoke in a hoarse whisper.

"So they left you alone, boy!" There was no censure in her voice.

I was neither shocked, startled, nor frightened by her sudden return to consciousness. I took her wasted hand in mine.

"Not quite alone, Polly," I said. "I have you."

She smiled weakly and pressed my fingers.

"For a small while yet, with the help of God."

13

POLLY DIED an hour later, as quietly as if she were sleeping. Her last spoken words remain with me yet:

" 'Tis all a deep black mystery now, Davy, but one day it will be all clear. God's arms are big enough to embrace all the worlds—those we can see and those we can't. 'Tis hard, I know, to credit, but all the mysteries of this life are no problem at all to even the most stupid of the dead. . . ."

We had been talking of our departed friends, the vast distance that separated them from us, and the immeasurable magnitude of creation. I had told her all that happened while she was unconscious, although I believe that because of her strange clairvoyant powers it was unnecessary, except for details, and she pressed for even the smallest of these. She probed the depths of my own heart, too, and found its loneliness.

"Don't fret," she consoled me. "There is reason in everything, and the knowledge is on me that ye will meet your Lanadora again and find happiness." She chuckled suddenly. "Don't you believe that she is so far away, for the greatest distance a body can travel is only the length of God's thumb. Soon now I'll be shutting my own eyes on you, and in a second will be gone as far as anybody can go, and yet you'll be surprised how close I'll be to you in spite of that."

Of Katie Farrington's instructions to me to get a priest, Polly evidently thought a great deal. " 'Tis she, with her great heart, would think of it. But 'tis no time now to be looking for Father Daly—not that he wouldn't try to get here if he knew my need. Sure I'll take a chance with God, Davy. He was never too hard on a body."

When I told her of how the others had settled their affairs before they left, she made me prop her up in the bed.

"'Tis a very bad head I have for business, Davy. Anybody would think I was a poor woman. I have a bit of my fortune left, and I feel disposed now to leave it to a few creatures I have in mind." She closed her eyes for an instant, and I thought that the strain of talking was beginning to tell on her, but she recovered again. "There's a black bag beside the dresser there, Davy. Will you give it to me?"

I found a cloth bag tied with a running string, and brought it to her. From its depths she extracted a tight roll of notes. "There's over a hundred pounds here," she said, "and if you'll take a scrap of paper now and write down my will, I will try to sign it and make it nice and legal."

In spite of my protests she named me one of her beneficiaries for the sum of £50. An equal sum was bequeathed to Father Daly for masses, and the remainder was divided among people on the mainland whom I did not know. When I had finished, Polly signed the penned document with difficulty, and I appended my own signature as witness.

"There!" said Polly, highly pleased with the whole business. "Only one more task I'll put on you, Davy. This island has been my real home and I don't want to be parted from it. As soon as the weather clears—as clear it will—I'd like you to lay my bones on the highest part of the island. There are many things I don't know about death, and if I have to wait for a long time the sound of the wind and the waves will be a comfort to me."

She died soon afterwards, a wonderful queenly woman, and I believe the storm was hushed somewhat by her passing.

Never afterwards did it regain its strength.

[*David Cartwright's manuscript ended here, but a letter addressed to Cathal O'Riain was clipped to the last page.*]

Dear Cathal,

To you alone I feel some explanation is due as to why I did not tell the truth about the disappearance of the islanders. After the storm, while I awaited your coming—for I knew you would be the first across—I tried to reason out what my best plan would be. I felt that to tell the truth would be stretching the credulity of even the most gullible, and even if by some miracle it was believed, it would, from my point of view, be most undesirable, for then the island would become a showpiece and there would be an end to my privacy. Not that I wished to become a recluse, but when Lanadora returned—and I was convinced she would, even then—I did not want her craft to alight on an island invaded by sightseers and tourists, or other hopefuls, scientific or otherwise. I had horrible visions of myself being nominated Ambassador Extraordinary

of the world powers to establish contact with other planets. . . .

In short, I was, and still am, selfish enough to want to keep Lanadora to myself, and I did not want to invite a situation that would threaten our reunion.

As it was, I almost lost everything through the activities of our friend Joxer McGrath. I am happy to be able to tell you now that I no longer have any reason to fear him, since in a very short time Lanadora and I will be leaving this island and the world.

I leave the manuscript of my formula for peace with you. It is not, I fear, a perfect solution to world problems, but I hope it is a faithful presentation of my father's idea. If it does not achieve its purpose there may be a single idea in its context from which the perfect plan may grow. In any case my father may at last rest in his grave, and my duty is done.

I am sure you will want me to give your kindest regards to Dan and Frankie and the others, and I will gladly do that for you. I have told Lanadora something of the great debt we both owe to you, and it is her wish that you accept a signet ring that was once mine and is now yours. It is unique in that it has travelled farther than anything you have ever known, and, of course, it may at times also serve to remind you of us.

Finally, as Polly says, we will not be far away, since the furthest we can go is but the length of God's thumb, for, surely, He holds us all in His hand.

DAVID

Postscript—a Letter to the Publisher

Dear Mr. Garrity:

As you may have noticed, this work is not Science Fiction since there is little or no science in it. There is a space ship, it is true, but it is just glimpsed and nobody, least of all the reader, has an opportunity of examining it closely. There is just a *person* from outer space—no saucer-eyed, caricature creature with long antennae sticking out from the top of her head—but a girl differing in no way from all the other girls we know except that she possesses a higher than human degree of intelligence.

By accident this girl's life becomes entangled with the hard yet spiritual lives of an island people, clinging to their wind-swept wedge of land off the Irish coast. There are many such people on many islands off our western seaboard and I have had the privilege of sharing their company from time to time. I hope I have done them justice in my book. They are a princely people to whom "space travel" means the instant transition from earth to a spiritual world far beyond the limits of outer space. But the only way to this region is through the narrow door of Death.

In my book I have tried to merge the superintelligent with the relatively primitive to show, through the eyes of an unspoiled people—suddenly confronted with the vastness of the universe—that no matter how fast or far man can travel, even if he succeeds in hurtling himself to the very limits of space, he can travel (as Polly Cavanagh says) "only the length of God's thumb" . . . "since He holds us all in His hand."

Does the book suggest that I believe in future space travel? I believe that space travel is bound to come for us, but I am inclined to think that interplanetary travel is already an accomplished fact.

I find it difficult to credit that our earth, which by comparison is a mere speck in the Milky Way, is the only inhabited place in the Universe. I also feel that because we have not as yet mastered space travel we should not assume that it is impossible for anybody else to have accomplished it. However conceited, it is perhaps natural for us to believe that there is no intelligence greater than ours.

Besides all this, many strange things have been seen in the skies in these latter days. The little word UFO (unidentified flying objects) has a special significance in Washington and most other capitals. Many rational people in many parts of the world have seen UFO in the sky and because the objects have remained unidentified there are many people who would have us believe they have no existence.

I hope *The Vanishing Island* indicates that God created the Universe and he made it BIG, and it is quite possible that we may not be the only pebble on that vast beach, and that (incredible as it may seem) somewhere out there among the stars there may be a race a darn sight smarter than we are and perhaps a little more civilized.

It's just possible!

Yours sincerely,
CHARLES C. O'CONNELL

Rosebank
County Cork
Ireland

THE FAMILY AND THE CROSS

THE STATIONS OF THE CROSS AND
THEIR RELATION TO FAMILY LIFE

By Joseph A. Breig
Illustrated by Margaret Goldsmith

NIHIL OBSTAT
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IMPRIMATUR
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INTRODUCTION

ASK MOTHERS AND fathers if they would like to become saints. Many apologetically answer, "Would that I had the time! I am too busy rearing the children, keeping house, making ends meet." This recalls the days when some considered sanctity a luxury for the rich, who in being able to afford servants, could spend long hours in church and in prayer: they were often considered to be the holy ones. Pope Benedict XV defined holiness as "doing the will of God according to one's state of life." In the state of grace and with the right intention, married people can become saints doing their everyday home work. They often gain more graces with a dish cloth than with a Rosary, as one may sometime gain more graces getting up in the middle of the night to care for a baby than spending an hour in church. It is a matter of doing the right thing at the right time. Yes, but even more, it is fulfilling a sacramental vocation. This cannot be said in the same sense about being a lawyer, or a secretary, or a farmer. Marriage is a vocation; it is holy; it is a sacrament; it is a means of going to heaven. It is interesting that only three of the sacraments are entitled "holy": *Holy* Eucharist, *Holy* Orders, *Holy* Matrimony—not that the others are not holy but these are specifically designated. As a priest gets graces when he hears confessions, preaches, reads his breviary, so a couple under the right conditions is flooded with God's graces when they love each other, nurse a baby, teach the children. This because they too are fulfilling their vocation. It is because more and more people see marriage as a vocation that we can hope for more and more saints among those living family life. In Peru four natives have already been canonized and one beatified in a hundred years. In the U.S.A. so far we still have had no natives canonized. I am afraid we are not even remotely thinking in the direction of trying to be worthy to be a canonized saint.

Mr. Joseph Breig makes a new and important contribution to family spirituality in this book, *The Family and the Cross*. We priests may sometimes clericalize holiness; we may portray holiness as something purely monastic. In this booklet there is a unique and attractive lay vocabulary, lay thinking, lay example. It is a timely emphasis.

Married couples are sometimes unaware that suffering is one of their great home-made tools for sanctity. It is looked upon as an annoyance, but Christian marital love necessarily involves suffering, for the essence

of unity is not so much to enjoy each other, but to suffer together. Still joy and suffering are not two sides of a unity called love. What was once "desire" before marriage becomes "offering" after marriage. Some have described love as having three aspects: the digestive, the reciprocal, and the oblative. It is in the "oblative" sense, this self-giving and suffering that a couple purifies love. Without these elements, love would die, for passion can only promise, love can keep that promise. To refuse the call of self-immolation is the "sin" of obduracy and a rejection of love. One is then of no use to God, to society, to each other, or to oneself. To say "no" to this human impulse is to corrupt all one touches. It is the cult of selfishness. The Cross can teach us to love our neighbor; it can teach us compassion. Three-fourths of us, it is said, need it, but there is a strange, unhappy feeling that in too many souls this ingredient is left out.

The Cross is our main tool of sanctity at home. Christian love understands the Cross if it is seen in the context of Heaven. For pagans the Cross is a scandal. It absorbs them like whirlpools in a river at flood height. Suffering, however, must draw men outside of themselves. It is a reminder of Divinity itself. Not good in itself, the Cross can be priceless as a means of grace.

The bell rings in the life of everyone of us and all of us are someday called upon to suffer. The non-Christian tries to escape suffering and he becomes hard and selfish. He seeks comfort only and his spiritual energy dries up, but he must learn to suffer or it will destroy him. The egotist detaches himself from spiritual reality and becomes a hollow being—an empty body. Like the statue of Buddha, he looks down only at his own stomach and does not see the needy around him.

Not all can see the value of suffering. Suffering is often so inward, so hard to articulate. It has been a special mystery to all, especially pagans. Their many explanations have never been satisfactory. The Stoic saw in suffering a test of sheer courage; he was completely indifferent to it. The Epicurean saw his answer in pleasure, and the Dolorist tried to delude himself and saw evil as good and actually exulted in that which diminished him. Others saw in suffering only a mere punishment.

In his down-to-earth meditations, Mr. Breig gives a Catholic answer to the existence of the Cross. He shows that those who suffer most could well be our most important parishioners. A good Catholic makes friends with pain. He holds God's gifts close to himself but always with open hands. When God allows us sufferings it is not "to do us harm but to gather us into His arms." Suffering never gags a Christian, upon it he sharpens his teeth. Like a cargo stablizing a ship against storms, so

suffering stablizes us against the storms of passion. Mr. Breig weaves suffering into everyday family life and helps explain its mystery. Humanity will ever question suffering, as Job did so dramatically and so officially. But Job gave an answer. Pagan philosophers never learned it. Christ gave *the* answer for all times: suffering calls less for a philosophy, more for a living of it as worthwhile. "So vast was this question," says Paul Claudel, the great convert to Catholicism, "that the Word alone could answer it, but He did so not by an explanation, only by His presence." This presence helped Mary who stood beneath the first Red Cross crimsoned by the blood of her Son; it helped Veronica who so lovingly held a cool, moist compress to the throbbing, fevered brow of Christ; it helped Simon of Cyrene, who later gave his life to serve others, this same Simon must have seen the pallid face of Christ among the poor and on every crumpled pillow where a sick man's head lay.

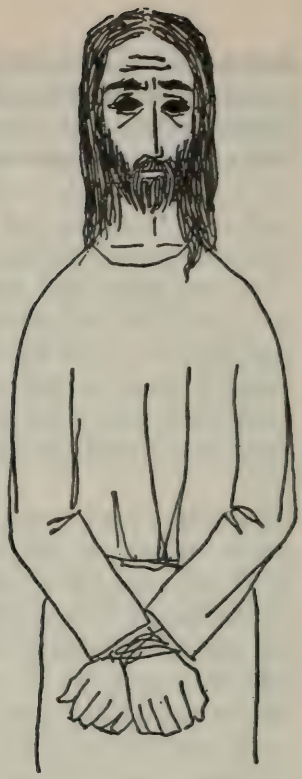
We learn with St. Francis de Sales that the love of Jesus begins in the Passion. We learn with Bishop Neumann of the deep beauty of the Litany of the Sacred Heart—a prayer he vowed to say every day. With St. Alphonsus we become more conscious of the Cross. It is constantly in his writing. When he saw a nail, a rope, a thorn, he thought instantly and tenderly of the Passion. The Cross returns us to the nothingness that we are and yet it lifts us into eternity. With Abraham Lincoln we fall on our knees often with the realization that there is no one else to go to.

In many churches of the country a large, special cross is carried in church for the Stations. There is no corpus on the cross; each person is reminded that he must replace Christ on the cross. He must learn how to suffer and why he suffers. He must be an extension of Christ. Christ has plunged Himself into humanity and wants us to make Him real today. He wants us to continue His Redemption, but this is done not by writing a good book, or organizing well, or by a great oration. One is a Christian when he or she represents Christ, "witnesses" Christ. Deeply we surrender our will, not with a mere external offering like that of Cain, but with an internal-external oblation like that of Abel—like that of Christ. The external gift is a symbol of the internal giving. We represent Christ so perfectly that we become a mystery to those around us.

In the everyday romance of the world we pierce our valentines with an arrow. The Sacred Heart is the first, true Valentine sent by the Father. But His love is pictured by a heart and a cross rather than an arrow. His heart is not only the symbol of love but the Cross of hope. The Cross is not the symbol of death; it is the symbol of life. The Stations do not end with a dead Christ in the tomb, but a glorious, living Christ on Easter Sunday, and always in our tabernacles. He is every city's most

distinguished resident who invites His best friends constantly to "take up your Cross and follow Me." The Cross is Christ's way of identifying Himself and His own. Christians realize it is a gift, not a curse for with Dante "sorrow remarries us to God."

Rt. Rev. Msgr. Irving A. DeBlanc
Director, Family Life Bureau
National Catholic Welfare Conference



I - JESUS IS CONDEMNED TO DEATH

EACH OF US is condemned to death. Let's face it. There is no use in being afraid of facts. We may turn our backs, but the facts won't go away. The sensible thing, the honest thing, and in the long run by far the pleasantest thing, is to see life clearly as it really is, to accept its conditions, and then to make the most of it.

Every parent, it seems to me, ought to make the effort of profoundly realizing that the moment a child is born, the child starts to grow away from its father and mother. The child, indeed, begins to die, even in the instant that it begins to live. By honest facing of such realities, we can make realities serve us, make them stimulate us rather than terrifying us into inaction—or wrong action.

It is simply a fact of family life that children are made to serve God, not to serve parents. And parents are made to serve God, not to serve children. These are happy facts; not unhappy facts. And understand, I

am only trying to get the emphasis right, because it is the emphasis that is at the root of all happiness, and all true success.

Much of every child's service of God will consist in being good to his parents. And much of each parent's service of God will consist in being good to the children. But as I said, the emphasis must be right, because if it isn't, we will all harm one another instead of helping one another.

Dreadful damage is done to children by parents who act on the unspoken assumption that children exist to serve parental comfort or parental ambitions. And dreadful damage is done to children who are allowed to grow up supposing that their parents exist to serve them. Corrosive family unhappiness is rooted in such errors.

We must get clear in our heads and hearts, from the beginning, that if God sends us a child, he sends us some one who is made to serve Him—to take up his cross and follow Christ. We ought not to shy away from that word "cross." God sends no cross that we cannot carry; and most of our crosses are small ones. The point is to trust Christ and follow Him; He will not let our backs be broken.

Now if you will face honestly the facts about your own destiny, then almost automatically you will rear your children to face honestly and bravely the facts about theirs. And if you do that, you will have prepared your children properly for life—for this life and life everlasting.

There is no sense in concealing from ourselves and our little ones that we are condemned to death by Adam's sin; that the central fact of life is death, and that the life that achieves a good death is the only life worth the living, the only life that is successful.

Nor should we try to evade the fact that although we are condemned by inheritance to physical death, there is a truly terrible and hideously permanent death to which we can condemn ourselves—and to which nobody else can condemn us: the death of the soul.

Once we have faced those realities, there is nothing else that we need fear overmuch. Other condemnations, certainly, will come upon us. Pilate was a figure of the compromising and vaccilating world. He was the incarnation of the time-serving of the world, as Christ was the incarnation of God who is infinitely just and good. God and the world faced each other in Christ and Pilate.

There will be Pilates in our lives and the lives of our children. Time-servers will counsel cowardice, and condemn us if we reject it. The world sometimes will wash its hands of us if we follow Christ. Let it wash.

God forbid that we should be the Pilate type of parent, teaching cheap Pilatetry to our boys and girls! No; what we want is not over-protected youngsters, but youth prepared to face up to life, to face it with Christ and as Christ faced it. We do not want a young man or a

young woman clinging to us when duty calls; we want the kind who will take us by the hand firmly, say goodbye, let go, and turn away into destiny. And we want to be the kind of parents who proudly watch our children go.

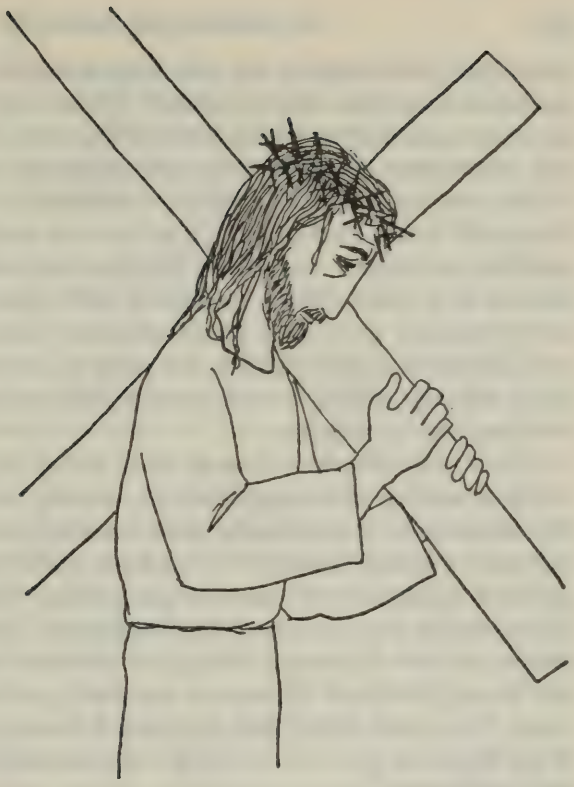
The world will often wash its hands of brave and just men. But Christ came to redeem every one, including Pilate. What we want in our family life is the courage to join Christ in His work of Redemption; to be undisturbed when the world washes its hands, and to go on working serenely for the salvation of the very world that rejects us.

Parents and children must go away from one another in order that they may be forever united. It is the task of the Christian parent to turn the eyes and hearts of youngsters to God. And when that is done, we shall find that they have really been turned to us. But if we sentimentally make our children our own conveniences instead of God's servers, we shall discover to our horror that we have lost them entirely.

As I said, it is a matter of emphasis. But the emphasis makes a difference as wide as the gulf between heaven and hell. Christ allowed Pilate to condemn Him not only that He might die for our redemption, but also in order to teach us that all things—including a Son's love for His Mother and a Mother's love for her Son—must yield to duty—to the will of God.

We are all condemned to death, but only so that death can open for us the door of life. The heart of a parent is burdened when a child answers God's call to marriage or to religious life—but only in order that the same heart may later be proudly lifted to inexpressible happiness. That is the thing about the will of God—it demands of us only in order to give, heaped up, pressed down and running over; because God is infinitely good and infinitely wise.

And this is the great truth that we must convey to our children, both by word and example but above all by example—that life calls for courage and loyalty and devotion, and that the world's opinion is a small thing. If the world has a good opinion of us, let us smile it away; and if the world has a bad opinion, let us smile that away too. What matters is not the world's opinion and its nervous swinging between defense of us and condemnation of us. What matters is not Pilate's judgment but Christ's friendship; and the family which realizes that, has discovered the deepest secret of happiness and success.



II - JESUS IS MADE TO CARRY THE CROSS

THOSE AFFLICTED with self-pity have often debased the concept of "carrying the Cross." They have made it a snivelling idea. Their sighs and tears and pietistic postures make it appear that they are being terribly put upon, and are bearing dreadful and unfair burdens with fantastic heroism. This sort of thing does indeed invite derision from scoffers like the communists, with their taunts about "pie in the sky" and about religion being the opium of the people.

This is a penalty which true religion has had to pay for its kindness and patience with the weakest and most self-centered of its adherents. And men—that is, men as distinguished from women—must accept a large part of the guilt for this distortion of the noble and manly idea of taking up one's cross and carrying it courageously and cheerfully. Far too many men have left religion to women and children; and what result

could have been expected but that religion would come to appear feminine and sometimes almost childish? Women and children would not be women and children if they behaved like men. The fault is not theirs; the fault is men's for not having been religiously manly.

The carrying of the cross, rightly understood, is the manliest idea in the world. In the final analysis, it is the only manly idea. No man is a real man who shirks crosses. But this does not mean that a man—or a woman or a child—should go around with upcast eyes like a plaster saint, making a great show of self-conscious patience under intolerable tribulations. The plain truth is that most of our tribulations are rather easily tolerable if only we will not magnify them out of all proportion with our own theatricalism.

The trouble with far too many of us is that we go through life as if we were writing, producing, directing, starring in, and ourselves being the audience for a melodrama about ourselves. Some people can make a Broadway production out of a headache, and a Shakespearean tragedy out of a smashed fender on their automobile. They are victims of self-dramatization and of a frantic sentimentalism. There are folks who will mourn the loss of a dog as if they had lost their immortal souls. These are the people who, as Chesterton remarked, spell the word "dog" backward. They make a dog their god; and if the dog dies, they behave as if the light had gone out of the sky and the future had turned to unrelieved despair.

To point this out is not being anti-dog or anti-anything. It is merely one of a thousand handy examples of the exaggeration of an ordinary sorrow into a thing too terrible to be borne. There are women who will become unfit to live with for weeks if a vase is broken. There are men who are inconsolable if their alma mater loses a football game. There are people who smash what ought to be a happy marriage because the wife wants to sleep instead of getting up for breakfast, or because the husband prefers reading books to dancing. We could multiply examples endlessly, but what we are talking about is those unfortunate human beings who have never outgrown being spoiled children, who have never learned to come to terms, realistically and goodnaturedly, with life as life actually is.

The Christian concept of carrying the Cross is simply a nutshell description of an honest, mature and religious outlook on life. It is a simple fact that even the longest life is short. Even the most atrocious suffering must end. Even the most poignant sorrow is comparatively brief. The truth is that life and everything in life are merely means to an end, to a purpose, to an achievement. And the achievement is nothing short of

an eternity of such happiness as cannot possibly be described because it is far beyond the power of the human mind to realize or to imagine.

When facts like those are firmly grasped and profoundly understood by the soul, then you have a man who is a man, or a woman who is a woman. You have a person who can put everything in a right perspective. You have somebody who is prepared to carry any cross because he knows that he is walking toward a fulfillment that will make everything, in retrospect, seem small. And this kind of person will not snivel over his crosses. He will not enlarge his crosses in his own mind until they tower like skyscrapers and increase in weight until they crush him.

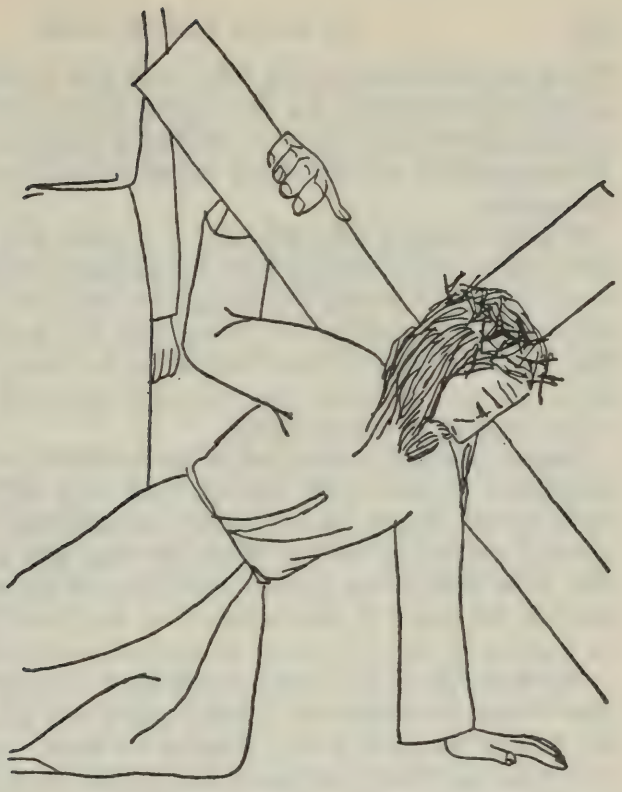
The manliness, the magnificent manliness, of Christ is little appreciated. Christ knew from the instant of His conception what the climax of His life would be. He knew that his task was to live the most burdened life in all human history, and to die the most sorrowful death. But never did Christ have one instant of self-pity or self-glorification. He went at the work of living and of redeeming in the way that a real football star goes about the labor of driving toward the goal posts for a touchdown.The player can see his objective, and it is his objective that is ever uppermost in his mind. He is hardly aware of the bumps and bruises and weariness he endures on his way to the last stripe on the field. And that was the kind of manliness that Christ had.

Christ took up His cross because He had a job to do. He embraced it because it was the way to the eternal glory for which He had been born. And that is the attitude that each of us should have toward the crosses that come our way as the years pass.

Does one of your children die? Well, death is something for which each of us is born; it is a thing that is ever present in every life. What is really important is not the time of death, but the kind of death. Any good death at any time, any death in the love of God, is an everlasting triumph. Of course you sorrow if a child dies; but you do not, if you are a grownup Christian man or woman, elevate your sorrow into a religion forevermore. You do not make your sorrow a kind of idol to be worshipped each day that you live. You take up the cross, you carry it manfully, and by your courage and cheerfulness you make it smaller and smaller until it is very light. After all, each passing day, if you have the true view of life, brings you closer to the endless reunion with your child in unthinkable happiness.

It is properly the task of men to make religion a thoroughly manly thing. Oh, religion is womanly, too, and it is child-like. True religion is universal; it embraces every one. But religion is not what it ought to be unless it is manful also; unless it is firmly embraced and profoundly

encompassed by real men who see life honestly and see it whole, and refuse to shrink from it or run away. Carrying the cross, truly, is nothing else than living bravely with the right motives and the right kind of love of God and fellowmen.



III - JESUS FALLS THE FIRST TIME

THE FATHER WHO has never reached the heights in business, industry or a profession is often the loudest in condemning his son for not making a brilliant record in school. The mother who bores all her friends stiff is not infrequently the first to criticize her daughter for not excelling in social graces.

To put the same thought into other words, you can usually depend on the man who never played quarterback to denounce the mistakes of the team he is watching; and the chap who couldn't throw a knuckle ball to save his soul will tell everybody in ten thousand words what is wrong with the pitching in the big leagues.

The fellow who isn't trying—who isn't even playing—is often the first to criticize the fellow who is. And this small and mean and annoying human practice extends into the field of our relations with our Creator.

The irreligious man—the chap who never goes to church—delights in reciting the faults and sins of religious people. This is a peculiarly simple-minded form of hypocrisy, because it ignores all the complexities of human nature, and the almost endless complications of the struggle for sanctity.

It is also almost a dead giveaway. We cannot ever really judge anybody, but we may be sure that there is something wrong with the spiritual life of the man or woman who is quick to find fault and slow to praise. Often there is something very wrong with that person's psychological life, too. He is trying to build himself up by tearing the other fellow down. He may not realize this, but more often than not it is a deep-seated cause of his critical attitude.

Another profound cause is lack of charity—that is, of love of God and fellowmen. Whoever really loves the other chap will be instant in recognizing and mentioning his virtues and achievements, and slow to speak of his sins and failures. When the other fails, he will either help him to his feet, or look the other way. He will not point a finger and shout at the crowd to draw attention to the fallen figure. If he does, he is not at all like God; and to be like God is our business.

We would all be in a frightful position if we were to be treated by God as most of us treat one another. Christ was asked point-blank by St. Therese, the Little Flower, whether her faults displeased Him. His answer was no. What other answer was possible? Sin alone displeases God; and faults are not sins. Faults are simply failures due to the fact that we are human beings and not angels. A dish may slip from our fingers and shatter, simply because we are human. Nothing of the sort could happen to an angel.

But men are not angels. It is of paramount importance that we realize this fact, and behave accordingly. I have heard of parents whipping children because they accidentally smashed something around the house. To the Christian soul, that sort of thing is sickening. And why is it sickening? Because the Christian soul is moved by love of God and neighbor; and love does not indulge in ill-tempered injustice.

But what of those who exaggerate and over-punish not merely the mistakes and faults, but the sins—the real sins—of others? The damage that they can do to the spiritual life is incalculable. They can discourage people who are striving for holiness. They can even cause people to stop trying altogether. In that case, they run the frightful risk of being responsible, in large part, for the loss of an immortal soul.

Let the irreligious and the carping man scoff and scorn all he pleases; the fact remains that most of us achieve holiness not by soaring in a jet-like flight, but by falling and rising, falling and rising, stumbling and

getting up and going on. Only a foolish person is shocked by the sins of others. The wise man *knows* that wounded human nature will fall. He expects it to fall. He is never surprised by its falls. He is not specially concerned over its falls; what he cares about, chiefly, is spurring others to keep on trying.

Christ carrying the cross to Calvary is a picture of the ordinary spiritual life. Spiritually, Christ could not fall; being God as well as man, He could not be like us in that. But in all else He *was* like us. His body, like ours, could grow weary, could collapse under a burden. But when Christ fell under His cross, He did not stay down; He struggled to His feet and went on.

The true Christian is like that in his spiritual progress. He does not run to the heights; he staggers, he weaves, he falls, he rises, he struggles, he fails, but he never gives up. Those who stand scoffing at him are like those who stood hooting at Christ walking the way of the cross. But no decent man wants to be like the hooters. The decent man wants to be like Simon of Cyrene; he wants to lift part of the burden, and encourage the burdened one to go on, and to go on going on until at last he achieves success.

Where else than in the family do we have a better right to demand that everybody be like Simon of Cyrene? If a husband and wife cannot be helpful to each other, and to their children, to whom can they be of service? If they carp and nag, if they scoff and find fault, if they exaggerate every fault and sin to the proportions of final failure, will not they destroy the spiritual life in that home, and with it the happiness that ought to be present?

It is the duty of parents to be Simons of Cyrene. Simon did not ask whether Christ was guilty or innocent. That was not his concern. His task was to help somebody who needed help. And it is likewise the task of fathers and mothers to take up the burdens of their children, to lead the way forward and upward, and always to encourage and never to discourage. Children will sometimes be guilty; but guilty or innocent, they have the right to be able to turn with confidence to their parents.

This confidence is something that parents must earn. They must earn it day in and day out, beginning with the moment when their little ones are taking their first faltering steps. Children are entitled to know from long experience that no matter how far they may fall, in no matter what depths they may become mired, they can be sure that when they turn to their parents, they will be received with understanding and sympathy, and will be helped.

The parent who thus rears his children will reap a hundred rewards, heaped up, pressed down and running over, because his children will

love him, will respect him, and will almost certainly, immediately or later, try to measure up to the measure of his love for them. But the youngster who is nagged and accused and berated, whose every fault and failure is magnified from a mole hill into a mountain—or from a mountain into a mountain range—can hardly be expected to rise up and call his parents blessed. In fact, he can hardly be expected to rise at all, once he has fallen, because he has received little but hooting from those who ought to have cheered him on.

IV - JESUS MEETS HIS BLESSED MOTHER

IT IS UTTERLY impossible for any human being to come within a mile of appreciating fully the sacrifice made by Mary when she gave her divine Son for our salvation.

God alone can understand it. We cannot, because in order to do so we would have to be as pure as Mary, as totally sinless as she, and equally capable of love. We are not.

But there is one thing that we can understand and appreciate, and that is that neither Mary nor Christ snivelled when they met while He was on His way to crucifixion.

Jesus was wounded infinitely more, and Mary immeasurably more, than any one of us possibly can be, but they did not indulge in self-pity or in recriminations against God for appointing them to carry so dreadful a burden.

Christ is God, and as God He perceived clearly and completely why He was going to His death, and what incalculable good He was accomplishing. Christ is man, and as man He was intolerably laden with our sins.

But Mary is human only; and as a woman we salute her and boast of her.

In the hours of Christ's Passion, she did indeed give mankind something of which to be proud forevermore. She is one of us, who are less than the angels; but she earned a place unthinkably higher in eternity than the place of the highest and holiest angel.

The poet who called Mary "our tainted nature's solitary boast" was inexpressibly more right than he could possibly have realized. Not any of us can ever grasp with our minds the fullness of Mary's nobility and dignity. No honor that we can pay to her, save only the divine honor which belongs to God alone, is too much honor. Because of her, a representative of our human race is enthroned in the highest place possible for any creature. One of our own is Queen of Heaven, Mother of God, co-Redeemer with Christ, and co-Ruler of the everlasting kingdom.

Unless we understand something about Mary, we cannot understand much about the Passion of Christ. Christ's physical sufferings, dreadful though they were, were small and superficial compared with his psychological and spiritual agony. If we cringe at the thought of the tortures inflicted upon Him, if our hearts ache at the sight of the beatings and piercings, then we ought to feel utterly broken in the presence of his invisible torments.

They were invisible, but they become visible to the eye of one who meditates upon Mary. For Mary's passion was entirely psychological and spiritual; it was completely invisible, yet so terrible that had Christ's sufferings been merely of the body and not of the soul at all, then Mary's agony would have been an agony more frightful than His.

We cannot begin to see into the depths of what Jesus sacrificed for us until we turn our minds into the heart of Mary to perceive what she endured in contributing to our redemption. It is not enough to say that Mary suffered the equivalent of death. She suffered more and worse than the equivalent of death.

Death has its bodily terrors, but the most terrible terror of death is the rending apart of a creature in his deepest depths; it is the separation of body and soul, compared with which nuclear fission is a mild and slight division.

Now the agony of Mary was an agony incomparably more dreadful than the rending of a man's being by death. What death tears apart is an arrangement of nature; and that is a frightful tearing. But it is as

nothing compared with the forcible separation of total love from total love. And that was what happened when Our Lady was separated from her Son.

Mary's whole matchless being, capable of unthinkably greater love than any other creature, was utterly in love with her Son. To be separated from her Son, to see her Son reviled and wounded, was for her worse than an eternal succession of physical deaths. Indeed, it is impossible to understand how Mary's physical heart endured the sight of the tormented Christ without physically breaking and bringing on bodily death. I personally would speculate that her heart was miraculously preserved from breaking.

However that may be, what Mary endured was of the type of what Christ endured in the Garden of Gethsemane, when His human nature was so inexpressibly tormented by His horror of sin that He sweat blood. It does not seem to me that Our Lady's body, unless divinely sustained, could have survived the spiritual and psychological torture she endured in seeing her Son led to execution in unthinkable suffering. I think that God's intervention must have been necessary to keep her from dying on the spot when she met Jesus on His way to Calvary.

We approach now the depths of this matter. For not only did Mary endure a million deaths upon millions of deaths, but she never for a moment doubted God and God's goodness. Not for an instant did she rebel. Not even remotely did she allow her faith to be shaken. Her will never turned the tiniest fraction of an inch from her utter consecration to God and to God's inscrutable purposes.

In the midst of a spiritual agony which ought to have shaken the universe into chaos, she freely gave her Son for our redemption. She gave Him back to the impenetrable purposes of God from Whom He had come to her. She made, willingly, indomitably, and with a courage that makes the mind reel, the incomparably supremest sacrifice of which it is possible for any created being to be capable.

Mary gave absolutely everything, she sacrificed all, she held nothing for herself, because her all, her everything, was Christ.

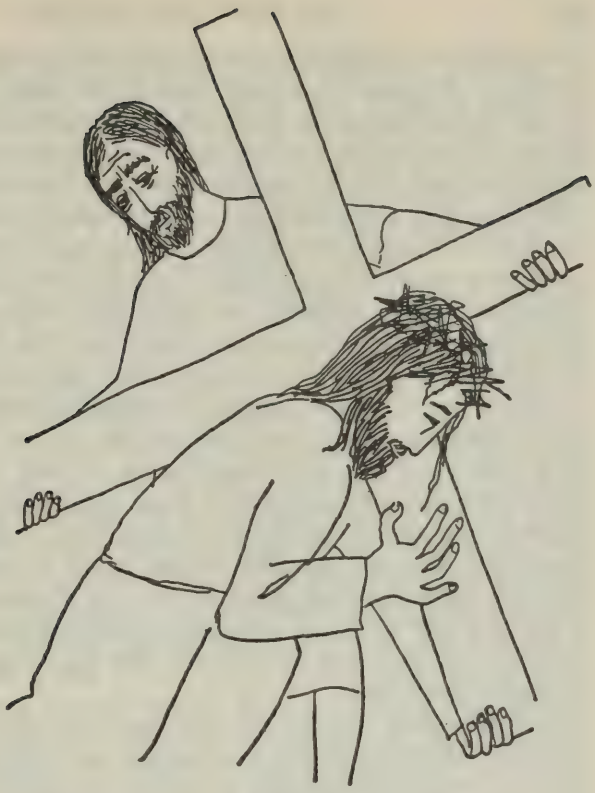
And as I said, she did not snivel. She indulged in no theatrics. Not once did she cry out that this was too much, that she could not stand it, that to ask this of her was asking more than flesh and blood could endure. There on the way to Calvary, two beings of unthinkable nobility looked into each other's eyes and faced squarely, without the slightest retreat or deviation, the most awful duty of which it is possible to conceive.

Christ and Mary had a work to do. They had a world to save. They had a spiritual family to bring forth in unutterable anguish. Upon them fell the grinding, crushing labor of giving birth to the children of God

who are to share with God His own divine life and happiness forever and forever.

That was their task, the task of Jesus and Mary; and although it meant for each of them such suffering and rending as is utterly outside the grasp of the human mind, they proceeded to it bravely, without the slightest outcry of protest.

This indeed was nobility. This indeed was royalty. Christ and Mary did not shrink from, nor complain about, taking up your burden and my burden and everybody's burden. They simply took up the burdens without question because they loved not themselves and their comforts, but God and their fellowmen. And this is what we must try to learn from them—that only the fool flees from the hiddenly merciful designs of God, which come out of His infinite love and wisdom, not for our destruction, but for our perfection and glorification.



V - SIMON OF CYRENE HELPS CARRY THE CROSS

NOW HERE IS a strange thing. Here is a bewildering thing. Here is a downright dumbfounding thing. Christ the omnipotent, He who could say to a mountain, "remove from here," and it would remove—Christ no longer can carry His cross. Christ needs somebody to help Him to carry out His mission of salvation.

Christ is falling, Christ is fainting, Christ is failing. Christ needs an assistant; Christ the rescuer of all mankind needs rescuing. And in this moment of shattering drama, does God send an angel, or a prophet, a flaming personality such as John the Baptist? No, God sends a man of whom nobody ever has heard. God selects a chance passerby to lift Christ's burden and to walk beside Christ on the way to Golgotha.

What mystery is this, that the most ordinary and casual onlooker is lifted to immortality, is chosen to lend his strength to the All-Powerful

One when the All-Powerful One is helpless? Cannot the divine Christ, the healer of lepers, the giver of sight to the blind, the restorer of life to the lifeless, cannot He finish his work unless he is assisted by this Simon of Cyrene who has blundered onto the scene, and who, we may guess, has small taste for carrying crosses for condemned criminals?

Mystery it is indeed; mystery of mysteries. It is as mysterious, this incident, as St. Paul's remark about filling up in his own body what is wanting in the passion of Christ. What can possibly be wanting in the passion of Christ? Although we know that God could have repaired fallen human nature by a simple act of His Will, yet He demands for our personal salvation an act of our will, a cooperation with His grace.

This is the mystery of human freedom, without which man is not really man at all. Man to be man must be able to make choices. Man to be what he is, the image and likeness of God, must distinguish between good and evil, and choose good. How else is man to have any dignity? How else is man to be like unto God? How else is man to be happy—for does not happiness consist in the knowledge that one has done the good that one ought to do, and avoided the evil that one ought to avoid? How can man share forever in the happiness of God unless he has identified himself with that happiness by freely choosing God and God's way?

It is like asking whether any of us can enjoy the beauty of a sunset without ever having gazed upon a sunset, or the lilting joy of symphony music without having listened to it. What the conductor of an orchestra feels, we cannot feel without sharing, according to our capacity, in his experience. We cannot have any of his happiness in music without ourselves entering into music. Neither can we enter into God's eternal joy without choosing for ourselves the cause of that joy, which is God's goodness.

There are those who blindly complain about this; who would prefer that God force His happiness upon them without their doing anything to make themselves capable of it. But this is impossible. As well might we ask that we know the joys of love while refusing to love; or the pleasure of knowledge while declining to learn. If you do not know a single word of English, and resolutely refrain from acquiring any English, it would be foolish of you to complain because you cannot enter into the joy of reading Shakespeare in his own tongue. You are simply incapable, through your own choice, of sharing in the experience and the insights of Shakespeare.

Thus it is with God and man. Christ has opened the door; Christ has led the way; Christ has given us all the means for fitting ourselves for the happiness of heaven. But if we turn our backs, if we walk the

other direction, if we reject the means, then we shall find that with respect to God's happiness, we are like blind men trying to enjoy the sight of flowers, we are like the deaf wanting to listen to music, we are like paralyzed persons longing for dancing and the poetry of movement. We must do our part. We must lift a burden as Simon lifted; we must walk with Christ as Simon walked. We must fill up in ourselves, as St. Paul filled up, what is wanting of the passion of Christ.

The point is that what is wanting in the passion of Christ is my little bit, and your little bit. In one sense, Christ climbed alone to Calvary. In another sense, He climbed in the midst of a countless multitude of other climbers, each carrying his own little cross, his own little duty, his own contribution to the unselfish immolation of love. The passion of Christ took place at a certain time and in a certain place; but it extends backward to Adam and Eve, and forward to the last man and woman.

What we ought to see when we contemplate Christ's sacrifice is not the sacrifice of Christ alone, but the sacrifice of Christ expanded into countless other hearts and souls. This is the meaning of the Mystical Body of Christ; this is the meaning of the Church. The Church is Christ saving all of us by enlisting our willing cooperation. The Church is Christ and you and I and a vast concourse of others, indomitably struggling upward and onward toward the death that is the opening into life everlasting. Every last one of us is, or ought to be, a Simon of Cyrene, walking through life with Christ, enduring bravely life's vicissitudes and keeping our eyes always on the goal until it is achieved.

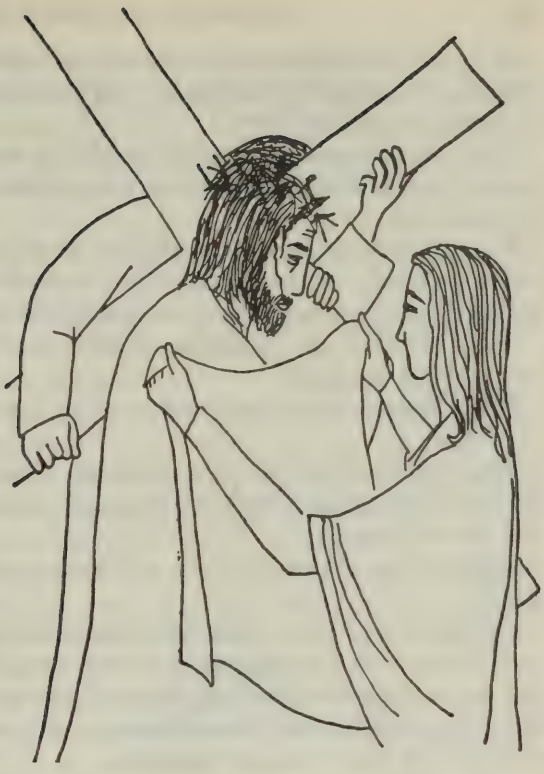
Unless the Simons do their part, the Simons cannot accomplish what Christ gave them the power to accomplish. All this is a mystery, and yet it ought to be as plain as a pikestaff.

Let us express it in this manner—the confessionals are always open, and guilt can be blotted out of our souls in an instant, but not if we will not enter the confessional. And even if we enter the confessional, nothing is accomplished without contrition. Nobody else can be contrite for us; we ourselves must turn from evil to embrace good. The instant we do that, we become capable of the life of God which is the life of love and goodness; we begin, in fact, to share God's supernatural life on earth. We have a foretaste of eternal joys; we enter into an anteroom to heaven.

But as long as evil is what a man loves, then what he loves is not goodness, and he cannot know the happiness that comes of goodness embraced. To make a homely comparison, if I cannot abide the taste of olives, then olives cannot give me pleasure. If I want the pleasure that olives give, I must change. And if I am to share the happiness of God, then I must fit myself to be happy by God's happiness; I must

become like God. I must determine to be a Simon of Cyrene who will be ready to walk with Christ and not to turn away from Christ.

Simon might have been a lover of comfort who would have so weakened his body with self-indulgence and luxury as to have been incapable of lifting the weight of Christ's cross. He was fit for Christ, when the test came, because his muscles were strong, and his soul willing. To each of us comes our moments of Simon-likeness, when we are called upon to do our bit in sharing the passion of Christ which leads to resurrection and glorification with Christ. It is our duty and our high privilege to be always prepared.



VI - VERONICA WIPES THE FACE OF JESUS

WHAT HAPPENED to Veronica's Veil was simply an outward expression of what happened in Veronica's soul.

Unless we understand this, we understand nothing about the spiritual life.

Christ sometimes chided the multitudes because they came to see signs and wonders, and not to learn from Him the way of holiness.

In Christ's words at such times, we hear a note that can only be called a holy impatience.

He seems to cry out against the blindness of people who cannot seem to see the point of His coming; who are moved by curiosity and excitement, or by a desire for physical healing, or by the hope of having favored positions in a new earthly kingdom—but not by the thirst for truth and goodness.

If we were Veronicas, we would not be running about looking for miracles. We would be looking for opportunities to serve Christ rather than being served by Christ.

If we were Veronicas, we would be able to see the divine behind the human; we would know Christ under all the layers of the world's sorrow and suffering.

If we were Veronicas, we would not need Lourdes and Fatima; we would need only the knowledge that somebody was in need, and that we serve God by serving fellowmen for the sake of God.

Veronica, when she approached Christ, could not have expected, or even wanted, a miracle.

What she saw was a man condemned as a criminal and being led to execution.

What she saw also was an opportunity to do a kindness out of the charity of a heart that kept the two great commandments—love God, and love fellowmen.

Veronica saw a man who was a sight to make one turn away one's eyes.

She saw a man whose flesh had been scourged to ribbons. Upon his head a crown of great thorns had been pressed, so that his hair and face were a mass of dried blood. He had been spat upon and struck with fists. From head to foot he was bloody and bruised; swollen and black and blue. He was a dreadful spectacle.

We may be sure that it took an effort of the will for Veronica to come forward to him and to cleanse his face. Not only was he a repellent sight, but by approaching him in pity she accepted for herself something of the contempt and hatred that was being heaped upon him.

It is likely that people screamed maledictions and taunts at her. No matter; Veronica's soul was a soul that loved.

It was a grace-filled soul; a soul into which Christ could look and see His own reflection, the image and likeness of God.

And so Christ, for a testimony of His own divine power and of Veronica's goodness, impressed upon Veronica's cloth the image of His face.

But He did not chide her for seeking signs and wonders. She did not seek signs and wonders; she sought ways and means of serving God, of serving Christ in His fellowmen, of earning the right to hear eventually from Him the words, "If you did it to one of these, My least brethren, you did it to me."

We are all tempted to go seeking signs and wonders rather than to see the signs and wonders that are all around us.

We kneel in church, perhaps, while making the Stations of the Cross,

and we wish that we could have been Veronica—that we could have wiped the face of Christ, and seen His face imprinted on the cloth.

Then we go home and never think that the face of Christ is all around us, waiting to be cleansed of its blood and sweat and tears.

The face of Christ is there in the lines on the countenance of Grandpa or Grandma. It is there in the weariness of wife or husband. It is there in the tears of a child over some little mishap. It is next door in the troubles of a neighbor.

The face of Christ is a millioned face. In every human being on earth, it waits for our touch of comfort and encouragement.

A husband is a Veronica when he helps his wife with the dishes, or brings her some token of his affection, or takes her out to dinner, or tells her of his love as he used to tell her in the days of courtship.

A wife is a Veronica when she smiles away her husband's discouragement over his job or his business; when she lifts his spirits with a word of admiration; when she renews his youth by her devotion.

Fathers and mothers are Veronicas when they kiss away the tears of children; when they quiet their fears about their school work; when they help them with their little concerns; when they praise their small accomplishments, filling them with new confidence.

We are Veronicas when we go next door or into a house down the street to offer our services in times of tribulation. We are Veronicas when we spend some time with lonely aging folk.

The earth is brimful of Christ hiding behind the faces of the worried, the hungry, the sorrowful, the doubtful, the uninstructed. Wherever there is need, there is Christ, waiting for the touch of our Veronica-cloth of kindness on His face.

And each time we touch Him so, His image and likeness grows brighter and clearer in our own souls. It can grow so bright and clear that when the Eternal Father looks upon us, He sees in us His only-begotten Son. And Mary, too, sees her Son in us, as she saw His image on Veronica's Veil.

Signs and wonders? Is it not a sign and a wonder that with a word and a smile we can lift the soul of another out of sorrow into joy, out of unhappiness into happiness, out of discouragement into hope?

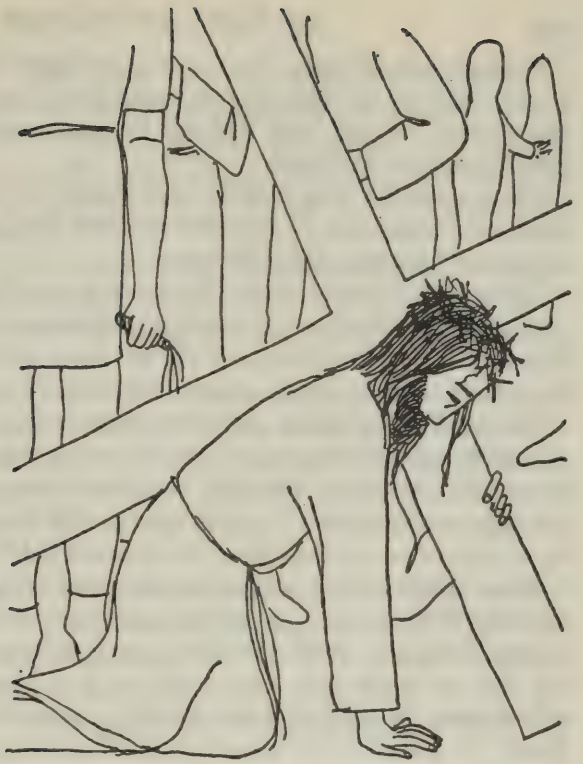
Is it not a sign and a wonder that with the cloth of our unselfish concern, we can smooth away the lines of fear or pain from the face of Christ in one of Christ's fellowmen? Is it not a sign and a wonder that we can turn the sobbing of a child into laughter?

In the persons of each of His fellowmen, Christ will be carrying His cross as long as the human race endures. There will never be a day or a place in which He cannot be found, His face seamed with suffering or

anxiety, and wet with blood or tears, in the face of one of those for whom He suffered.

There is no moment when any one of us cannot be a Veronica. We could be Veronicas even in the solitude of a desert; for although we were isolated from our fellowmen, we could with our prayers come to their assistance, whether they were here on earth, or suffering in Purgatory.

To be a Veronica is the high privilege of every last one of us.



VII - JESUS FALLS THE SECOND TIME

THE SECOND FALL is the fall that brings the temptation of discouragement. But giving up is the one thing above all things that nobody must ever consider doing.

You might almost call a Christian the man who never gives up. You might almost say that Christianity is the religion of not giving up, the faith which emboldens one to go on. Christians can do all kinds of things that they shouldn't, but the sin from which they flee as from the mouth of hell itself is the sin of throwing in the sponge.

You can't very well lie down and quit when the One you are following is Christ. He fell, but He got up. And never was any body wearier and more tormented than His.

He had sweat blood in the garden because His soul was so wracked by horror of sin that He was sorrowful even unto death. He had not slept, not even for the hour that His followers slumbered.

He had been set upon by a band armed with clubs and weapons as if they came for a robber. He had been bound and dragged before the High Priest. He had been buffeted by the servant. He had stood his "trial" before the Sanhedrin.

It was much the same kind of "trial" which we were to see undergone, twenty centuries later, by followers of Christ like Joseph Cardinal Mindszenty and Aloysius Cardinal Stepinac.

There were false witnesses. There was a brushing-aside of the rights of the prisoner. There was Christ's calm attempt to make these men see that they were doing wrong—if He had done evil, then let evidence of the evil be brought; if not, why did they strike Him?

He stood there bound while the interminable farce went on, with everybody against Him, and nobody showing the slightest disposition to be fair. And finally the High Priest cut through the doubletalk and got right to the point: "I adjure thee by the living God that thou tell us whether thou art the Christ, the Son of God."

Now Christ in all his intolerable exhaustion lifted His head and looked the High Priest in the eye, and answered yes. But in order that there be no possibility of doubt about His meaning, He uttered His solemn warning that He would come later in the clouds of heaven, with great power and majesty, to judge all men—including those who were condemning Him.

This is the Christ Whom we follow; how can a follower of His yield to discouragement; how can anyone despair in whom Christ has come to take up His abode?

Yes, His body was weary unto death, and His soul, sorrowful; but God does not give up, God is all-powerful; God goes on. And the blessed God lives in us by baptism and confirmation and Communion; we are not our own, but Christ's; we do not live alone, but Christ lives in us. And Christ cannot quit, Christ cannot, will not yield to discouragement.

From the presence of the High Priest He was taken to Pilate while the mob yelled for His blood. Then to Herod, and back to Pilate. And now He was handed over to the torturers to do their fiendish best to break His strength, to break His mind, to break His will.

Hunger and thirst bore down upon Him. Scourging rent His flesh and shed His blood in streams. Thorns pierced His head until it is a wonder that He was not driven mad. And the cross was put upon His back and He was led forth between the howling multitudes.

He fell and fell again, but He got up. And the Christian never stops getting up. The Christian tries and tries and will not stop trying, no

matter what burdens weigh upon him, no matter what obstacles are piled in his path, no matter what suffering tears at his vitals.

The Christian in the laboratory fails and fails again, but in the end he discovers the vaccine or the serum that will heal his fellowmen. The Christian in government is back-bitten and slandered; but he goes on for the good of his country.

The Christian father or mother, when the children are ill, is so worn for want of sleep that the head swims; but the Christian parent gets out of bed once more, and another time, and another time, and will not give up.

The Christian caught in the habit of sin struggles loose and is caught again; strives upward and is dragged down; confesses and straightway falls into the same evil; but the one thing that the Christian will not do is to throw up his hands. He will not surrender to the devil or to his human weakness; he will fight on to victory if it takes him every hour of his life and into his deathbed.

If we have faith, said Christ, we can say to this mountain, remove from here, and it will remove. And in the centuries since He walked among us, we have moved so many mountains that we have forgotten nine-tenths of them.

We overthrew the Roman rottenness and persecution; we took the shock of the barbarian invasions and converted the invaders; we turned back the hordes of Mohammedans and the dreadful armies of Atilla the Hun. We broke the power of tyrant after tyrant who tried to chain the Church to his chariot.

We moved the mountain of slavery and overthrew it. We overcame a thousand powerful heresies. We broke the despotic power of men over women, and restored womanhood to the high estate in which it belonged.

The earth, when Christ came into it, was one mountain range after another of disease and despotism and injustice and cruelty and lust. And the mountains fell one after another because Christian men and women, whatever their other faults, refused to do the one thing that means defeat—to give up. Time after time, the Christians, like Christ, were crushed to earth, but always, like Christ, they got up again and struggled on.

They spread through the world enlightening the ignorant, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, healing the sick, comforting the afflicted, bringing hope to the hopeless; and everywhere their touch, slowly but with indomitable sureness, transformed the world.

How could it be otherwise, when they could say, these Christians, with St. Paul, "Now not I live, but Christ lives in me," and with St. Patrick, "Christ before me, Christ above me, Christ beside me, Christ

in me"? It could not be otherwise; the follower of Christ cannot quit.

The follower of Christ cannot quit though his soul be sick, though his mind be burdened beyond endurance, though his body be tormented by illness or injury, though his family be scattered, though his business be ruined, though his friends play him false, though the devil himself seems to conspire against him. Who can give up, who can yield to discouragement or despair, when he sees Christ struggling that last hundred yards, that last yard, in order that He might hang upon the cross for our salvation? No; the Christian can fall, but the Christian just won't lie there and surrender. Not the Christian!

VIII - JESUS SPEAKS TO THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM

THERE IS A paradoxical sense in which we owe love and compassion to those outside the Church—and above all to the Jews—even more than to those within.

They need it more.

It is impossible, really, for the Christian to imagine what a dreadful burden it is not to have the Faith.

Within the Church there is laughter like the laughter of children secure in their home and in the love of Father and Mother.

Indeed, the Church is a happy family with God for Father and Christ for Brother and Mary for Mother; and with Joseph and all the angels and saints for good companions.

Outside that family, there is not the same kind of joy. Within it, we live in a kind of anteroom of heaven; we might well say that already we

are beginning to know something of the joys that eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, neither hath it entered into the mind of man.

In the voice of Christ there was sorrow and pity rather than reproach when He spoke to the women of Jerusalem: "Weep not for Me, but rather weep for yourselves and your children."

These women and their descendants were destined to bear through the centuries the cross of not having the Faith.

It is a crushing cross.

There is a mystery here; a deep, deep mystery.

It is akin to the mystery expressed in the liturgy when the Church refers to Adam's fall as a happy fault because it brought so great a Redeemer.

St. Paul touches briefly on the matter by saying that a darkness was permitted to fall upon Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles should come in, so that in the end all might be saved.

The Jews bear their burden of exile not alone for themselves, but also for us.

Contemplation of this tragedy nearly stops the heart.

Here were the chosen people who through thousands of years had borne the back-breaking burden of the true God amid hordes of idolators and pagans.

They had borne it with a patience that makes the mind reel. They fell, but always they rose again. They went backward, but always they turned forward once more, whiplashed by the uncompromising words of prophets sent by God.

They were chosen in the sense that they were selected for the sorrow and suffering of bearing witness to eternal divine truth, justice and goodness in a world given over to deadening and grovelling wickedness.

Through the ages they struggled, suffering in mind and body as no other people ever had suffered.

Through the ages they prayed, tearing their garments in the deserts and on the mountains, crying out to the skies to rain down the Just One.

Through the ages they waited and waited for the Messias, the King, the Deliverer, the Holy One, the Leader and Ruler who would restore the sceptre to Israel.

They thirsted and hungered, did the Jews; they were oppressed and tortured and put to death; they were enslaved and broke free again; they were despised and hated as the world will forever hate those who remind it of God and of the dignity of man, and of man's duties.

The Jews did not suffer alone for themselves; they suffered for us because out of their loins and out of their sorrows was to be born the Savior whose salvation has come upon us.

Through endless generations the Jews endured all things, hungering with a terrible hunger for the Holy One; and when He came, their leaders did not accept Him, and would not let them accept Him.

What a mystery! What a tragedy! "Weep not for Me, but weep rather for yourselves and your children."

The saga of Jewish suffering was not ending; it was to continue—for how long nobody knows.

From their ranks came first the Twelve, and then the three thousand converted by Peter, and others, to enter into the kingdom, to reap the redemption sowed through so many endless years of sorrow.

But for most of them, the darkness remained darkness, and they went on into further centuries, groping through it.

Indeed we do owe them compassion and love.

They gave us Christ and Mary and Joseph; they gave us the Apostles and the first disciples and the first martyrs.

Through the Jews we received the joys—the inexpressible joys—of the Sacraments, and of the unspeakable union with Christ which St. Paul tried to put into words by saying, "Now not I live, but Christ lives in me."

Through the Jews we received the Faith; and if we do not know that the Faith is priceless, is to be treasured above everything else under heaven, then we are fools.

What a mountainous debt we owe the Jews!—what a debt of gratitude and compassion!

The women of Jerusalem wept, and their children weep to this day. Without the Faith, without Christ, this is a weary world, and weary is every day that a man lives in it.

Sad, sad, sad is life without Christ.

Life without Christ is a kind of wilderness in which people wander bewildered, reaching out groping hands and finding no hand to grasp.

What a burden is sin—what a crushing burden—without the Sacrament of Penance which lifts it gently from our hearts and sends us forth as new as if we had but that moment been born.

What burdens upon burdens are the marching days, without Mass, without Communion, without Christ.

But what joys the days are when they are lived with Christ; when we move forward with Him, arm in arm, heart to heart, toward eternal triumph.

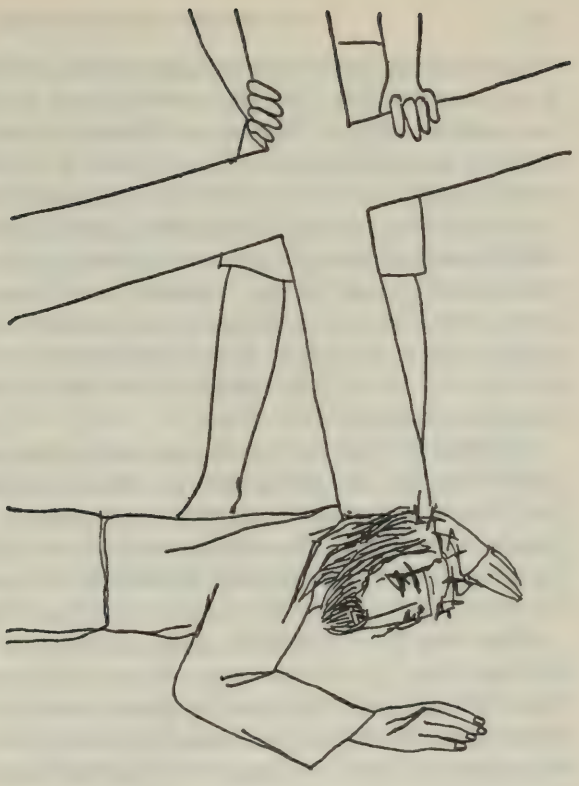
How good to know the goal toward which we advance, to see it before us, to walk with the strength of Christ forward and upward.

What a splendor it is to sing through life with St. Francis, because

it is not we who live, but Christ in us; Christ directing us, moving us, nourishing us, inspiring us.

What a joy to bubble with laughter like the laughter of children because we are the children of God, and are living in His House.

"Weep not for Me." Weep not for Christ; Christ is doing the will of His Father Who sent Him; Christ is advancing to His glory. Weep only for sin and for the sorrows of those who know not Christ; because to know Christ is happiness, and not to know Him, not to do His will, not live in Him and for Him and with Him, is the only unrelieved sadness on earth.



IX - JESUS FALLS THE THIRD TIME

NOW FOR THE third time there is driven home to us the lesson of the weakness of man which is the adopted weakness of Christ. Christ falls again; and it is physical exhaustion due to physical suffering which makes him do so. But the physical suffering is but the materialization of sin. Christ's agony makes visible to our eyes, and touchable to our touch, and imaginable to our imagination, the effects of sin on our souls. Christ is God incarnate; but we might say that Christ's sufferings are the incarnation of our rebellion against God our Father. It is the making-flesh of our refusal to be good sons and daughters. The weight of our treason, our ingratitude, our selfishness weigh Christ to the ground.

We must understand that there is a familyness about God and man. How God has striven to make us see this! The relationship is not merely one of Creator and creatures. It is more than a relationship; God and

we are relatives—the closest possible relatives. He is Father; I am a son. If any one ought to be able to understand what this means, fathers and mothers ought to. Fathers and Mothers know how their hearts, the moment they become parents, are placed in custody of their children, to be cherished or not cherished; to be treasured or to be broken.

A father (or a mother) has as many hearts as there are children. Each child is another opening into love; an opening through which there can enter either joy or sorrow, comfort or suffering. A child can lift a parent to the heights of happiness, or bow him to the earth in crushing misery. And if this can be done by the little love of a man for his son and of a son for his father, what of the love of God for man, which is boundless, unthinkably limitless?

This love of God for man is a mystery which we can penetrate only a little way; but the fact is that by His own decision, dictated by His love, God the all-powerful assumed human nature. Christ suffered in His human nature for us; that nature which He as God assumed out of love for us. And He did so because He desires to be not only Our Creator, but our Father; because He wants not only our obedience, but our love.

When this love is withheld, when we refuse it to Him, that is what scourges Him; that is what crowns Him with thorns; that is what buffets Him with fists and with insults; that is what bows Him down. It is under our withholding of love that Christ falls—once, twice, thrice. This is the weight that is too heavy for Him; this is what breaks the Heart He has given into our keeping.

And if a father and a mother and their children cannot understand this, who shall understand it? Do not they have daily experience of how their hearts are given to one another, and of how so much as a harsh word hurts? Do not they share one another's weaknesses, and by sharing them turn them into strength? Have they not learned how love can turn a home into a little heaven, and how the lack of it can turn a home into a little hell?

If families cannot appreciate the familyness of God and man, then who can appreciate it? God and man emphatically are a family. God as God is the father of each of us and all of us; and God as Christ is our Brother. By His life and His death even as man He earned all our love and our gratitude; they were due to Him always as God.

And yet we sin and press Him to the ground time and again. We sin through our own weakness, and we sin through our impatience and our uncharity toward the weakness of others. We fall, and we cry out for mercy; we excuse ourselves, we point to our own weakness. But others fall, and we berate them. We stand above Christ's fallen brethren and pour scorn and reproaches upon them. Far from extending a helping

hand, we consider that we are doing well if we refrain from kicking them. And if we do so to Christ's least brethren, we do so to Christ.

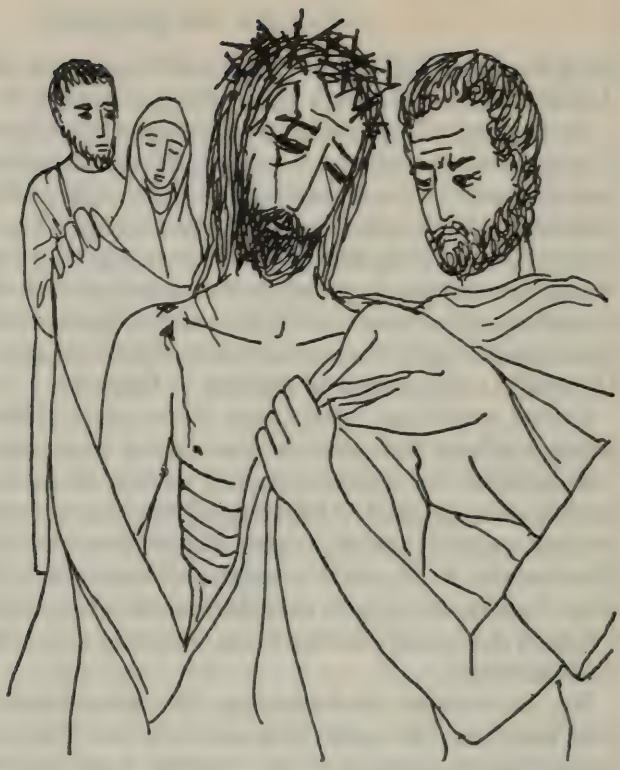
How poignantly does the prostrate figure of Christ on the way to Calvary plead for love, for sympathy, for understanding, for a word of encouragement, for a sign of loyalty! But in each of His fallen brothers and sisters, Christ again is fallen. Christ in them will go on falling to the end of time. In them He will continue to beg that we put ourselves in their place; that we share their burdens and their sufferings. If we refuse, if what we give instead is hardness and coldness, then mistake it not; that is what we would have given Christ had we stood looking down upon Him fallen to the stones on the road to Golgotha.

Parents meditating upon Christ fallen can meditate most richly by seeing in Christ their own children, and in their own children Christ. This is Christ who lies there crushed, beaten, exhausted; but this also is my son or my daughter. If Christ the perfect man who was incarnate God and not weighed down by original sin—if He could come to the end of His strength, if He could stumble and fall, then by what aberration, what insanity, do I expect unbroken success of my children? If I would not howl at Christ for having fallen, then why do I howl at my children when they fail?

No; love does not do these things. We are not speaking of emotional love, but of true love which is an act of the will. That act of the will puts one on the side of the loved one; it pledges loyalty and devotion through every vicissitude. It says to the child, "You are mine and I am yours, and you can depend upon me every time. I am yours, and you can depend upon me every time. I will be there when you need me, and never will I desert you. I will snatch you if necessary from the very mouth of hell."

That is what Christ did for every one of us; snatched us from the mouth of hell. We can, if we are determined to do so, turn our backs on Him and reject His rescue. We can negate His victory for ourselves. That is the mystery of free will, which can choose to love or not to love, to serve or not to serve, to be grateful or ungrateful, loyal or disloyal, friend or traitor. But if a father cannot do that to his own son, or a mother to her own daughter, how can they do it to Christ fallen for them on Calvary?

It is God who lies there in the self-imposed weakness of the Incarnation. But it is we also who lie there with Him, for His weakness is made of our weakness. Christ lies there, and we lie there, and our children lie there; and that is the meaning of Christ's fall. The still fuller meaning is this: Christ got up and went on again to victory, and with Him we go also unless we reject Him and His redemption of us.



X - JESUS IS STRIPPED OF HIS GARMENTS

LITTLE BY LITTLE, family life strips a husband and wife of all kinds of things that weight them down and slow them in their progress toward endless happiness. It strips them of pride; who can be anything but prostrate in humility and helplessness while a baby is being born into the world? In those anxious hours we learn rapidly how utterly dependent we are upon God. We realize profoundly what we have always known but have not really grasped—that He alone has power to give life. We understand His overlordship of everything, and perhaps for the first time we pray with all our hearts and all our strength.

Family life strips us gradually, too, of selfishness. Bit by bit, the willingness to serve replaces the desire to be served. There is a strange power in an infant's powerlessness; only a monster can refuse to tend a little one who depends upon his parents for absolutely every need.

Family life turns the mind from irresponsibility to responsibility. And

it opens the eyes of husband and wife to the enormous folly of sin. How enlightening is the process of trying to teach children the goodness which we ourselves once dismissed as old-fashioned!

Our youthful flippancy is stripped from us. Now we know why there are laws—God's laws, nature's laws, human laws. Solicitous for the good of our children, we understand suddenly God's solicitude for our good. We know now that His commandments are not arbitrary or capricious; they are directions for our protection from grievous harm. They are like our commandments to our children—do not cross the street without looking both ways; do not touch poison; do not play with sharp knives; do not get into an automobile with strangers.

"Do not get into an automobile with strangers!" How often we were warned by priests and parents, when we were adolescents, about avoiding bad company! But we thought they were old fogies; we were perfectly capable, we said, of taking care of ourselves. But now we caution our children as we were cautioned; now we know that laws and rules are made by those who love us, in a constant effort to keep us from evil and injury and suffering.

Our smart-aleckry is being stripped away from us. Our conceits are torn from us, and as they go one by one, we realize that they were tapes binding us hand and foot. How we clung to them! We thought they were part of what we called our liberty, but all the time they were holding us in slavery. And when we see them in our children, we recognize them for what they truly are.

Living in the family, we begin to see that the soul, like the body, is vulnerable to injury. We perceive how sin and self-centeredness and vanity wreck the soul's beauty as an accident can destroy the loveliness of a face, or the grace and mobility of a body. Follies of all kinds are being stripped from us; we are being made ready for the kind of death, when death comes, that is but the last great birth-pain of joy everlasting.

Garments of foolishness, of opinionated obstinacy, are being stripped from us one by one. And at last we come to understand something of the sacramentalism of marriage, the sacramentalism of family life. This is the vocation for which we were ordained in the Sacrament of Matrimony, this life with each other and with our children. This is the way of life in which we are to attain holiness; this is our salvation.

Now we can look upon each other, husband and wife, as far more than mere companions and mutual comforts. Why, we are co-saviors with Christ of each other! In the Sacrament we were united spiritually as well as physically, to the end that we should help each other, and help our children, to God. In heaven we shall—or we should—owe much of our salvation to each other. We are together not to hamper each other

on the way to everlasting life, but to walk toward it hand in hand, and to draw our little ones with us.

In a certain sense we are as priests. We are the first to wear God's own most beloved name, "Father." We are not merely to bring forth children physically; we are to help bring them forth spiritually, too. Priests are called "Father" because they are ordained for the work of giving life in the supernatural order. But the title came to them from natural fathers; and from the cooperation of natural fathers with the Fatherhood of God came the nobility of the word "Father" on earth.

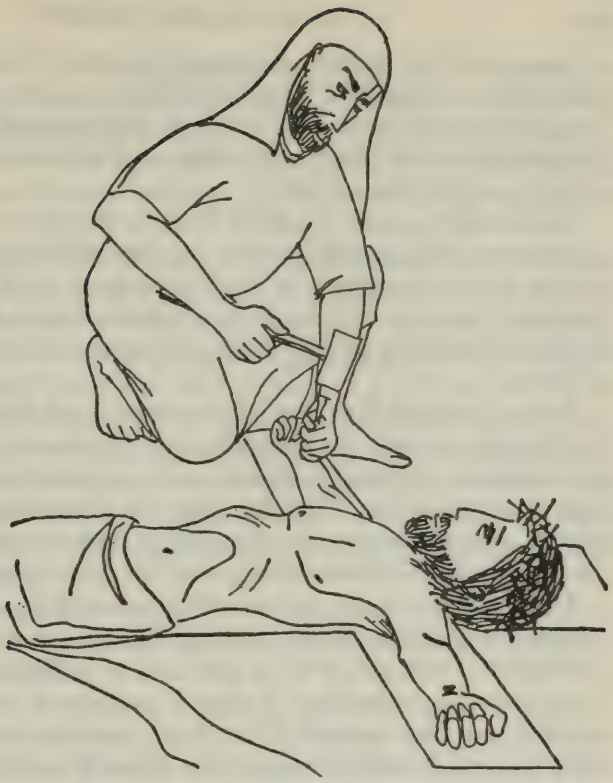
Now more and more of our blindness, our graspingness, our self-seeking, our self-love, is being stripped from us. More and more clearly do we see the sublimity of marriage and family life. Each bond that is torn from us sets us freer to walk forward in the grace that comes through the Sacrament of Matrimony. We are turning heavenward, and we want our family to turn heavenward with us. Now we rejoice if the children give us spiritual bouquets for our birthdays, instead of shaving kits or smoking jackets. Now our ambitions for our children become less and less worldly, and more and more other-worldly.

No longer do we desire that our children shall marry into wealth or position or power. What we want now is to see them, when their courting days come, meeting young men and young women who are *good*. Our minds have risen from short-lived earthly things to the incorruptible things of heaven. What we now desire is that our children shall marry others who will help them to salvation, or even better, that they shall enter the religious life.

Our hopes and our prayers are taking a new turn because we have been stripped of the things that were holding us down to earth. It is not that we are no longer conscious of the importance of reasonable success in earthly occupations. It is rather that now we realize that such success is not an end, but a means to an end.

We do indeed desire that our children, if they enter an occupation or a profession, and if they marry, make a success of their chosen field and of their way of life. But now we see that what is everlastingly important is that they use such successes for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. And if they elect the highest vocation—the life of total consecration to the things of God—then we are happy and proud and grateful.

Now the husband and the wife see each other with new eyes. In the beginning, perhaps they were attracted largely by physical beauty, by winning personality, by the capacity for happy companionship and shared entertainment. But now what they see in each other, chiefly, is *goodness*; and in that they find such joy as they did not previously dream of. Now they are indeed ready to live together happily ever after.



XI - JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS

IT IS A FRUITFUL meditation for a parent to think of his own son or daughter nailed to the cross. This does not mean that my child is substituted for Christ, but that through my child—through my love for my child—I am brought closer to Christ.

We parents must learn that it is not our vocation—as it is the vocation of some few—to go to God by forsaking others. Our vocation is to go to God through the embracing of others. From love of those who are ours, we are to deepen our love of Him Whose we are.

Christian marriage does not mean that a husband and wife love each other with one love, and Christ with another love. They are to love Christ and each other with the same love, and indeed with the same kind of love. There are not really various sorts of love; if we know what love is, there is one love only.

Love is not the physical embracing of another. The embracing is, or ought to be, an expression of love; and if it is not that, then it is not what it ought to be. If a husband and wife do not love each other in God, and in accordance with God's rights over us, then what they feel for each other is not truly love at all.

To love (let us mark it well) is to desire the good of the beloved, and to endeavor to bring that good to pass. But the beloved's truest good is to live in the friendship of God; in oneness with Christ. Christian marriage, then, is a state of life in which two who truly love each other, in the true meaning of love, assist each other to love Him by obedience to Him.

For the husband, then, the wife is a door into holiness; she is a way to God; and for his wife, the husband is a path to sanctity. In the Sacrament of Matrimony, husband and wife are to cooperate with Christ in each other's sanctification. Why else, pray, did Christ raise marriage to the dignity of a sacrament; why else did he make it one of the channels through which He pleases to dispense His divine grace?

This is not to destroy, nor to whittle away, the bodily aspects of life together in marriage. To the contrary; the joy of the coming together of husband and wife cannot be as great and as unalloyed as it ought to be unless consciences are clear. If there is anything of spiritual reproach in married love, their married love will not give the happiness it ought to give. Nor will it confer the unity it is intended to confer—the unity, the peace, the harmony, the serenity which ought to be its fruits.

This harmony and serenity of husband and wife are the deepest foundation for the happiness of the family. How many, many children live in a deep unease, rebelling against what they know not, because their father and mother are not united in Christ, or at least imagine that they are not united in Christ!

"Imagine that they are not united in Christ." This is a real and painful condition in our day of the opposite errors of puritanism and hedonism. Many a husband and wife are prevented, either by prudery or by the prevailing over-emphasis upon sex, from finding in marriage the joy and the security-in-God that this great sacrament was instituted to give them.

Either they enter into their giving of each other with consciences stricken by rigorism, or they expect more of their giving than even this great giving can give. In the one case, they feel guilty; in the other, they feel cheated. No; the Christian husband and wife must acquire the Christian attitude of mind toward marriage, if they are to find in marriage the depths of joy and goodness which they ought to find there.

Marriage, the Sacrament of Matrimony, is first a union of souls. Husband and wife love each other; not in the modern mistaken mean-

ing of being "in love," but in the right meaning that they are prepared to serve each other, to defend each other, to sacrifice for each other, to work together in mutual well-wishing for success in marriage. Out of the union of souls, out of this true love of each other, comes the union of bodies; and each union contributes constantly to the perfecting and deepening of the other.

Husband and wife must understand that Matrimony, like the other sacraments, was earned for us by Christ on the cross. It was not a niggling and fearful thing that He wished to confer upon us—and did confer. No; Christ desires that marriage shall be generous, and that husband and wife understand that their mutual giving is good and pleasing to Him. He wants husband and wife to see each other as pathways to Him; He wants them walking hand in hand, and heart in heart, toward Him.

If we are to see Christ in the least of His brethren, are we not to see Him in our own husbands and wives? Indeed, it is in our husbands and wives, in the Sacrament of Matrimony, that we ought to see Christ most clearly and intimately.

Marriage is its own vocation, and into it we are to throw ourselves with the same kind of dedication and self-abandonment that we expect of a priest in *his* vocation.

For the husband, his wife and children are Christ most closely and immediately. Wife and children are his vocation; his way to holiness. It is a lesser vocation than the religious vocation, in the same sense that a man is a little less than an angel. But this does not mean that a man is not a marvellous being; and it does not mean that marriage is not a marvellous vocation. And as a man or woman, in the order of grace, can rise higher than an angel, so can a husband and wife rise higher, in the order of grace—in the Sacrament of Matrimony—than this or that priest or Sister in another vocation.

We are not to be comparing our way of life, we wives and husbands, with the way of life of those in religion. We are not to be comparing our way of life with any other way. Our task is to devote ourselves to our own way wholeheartedly, with full trust in God's grace and providence, and with the fullest possible realization of the sublimity of our own vocation.

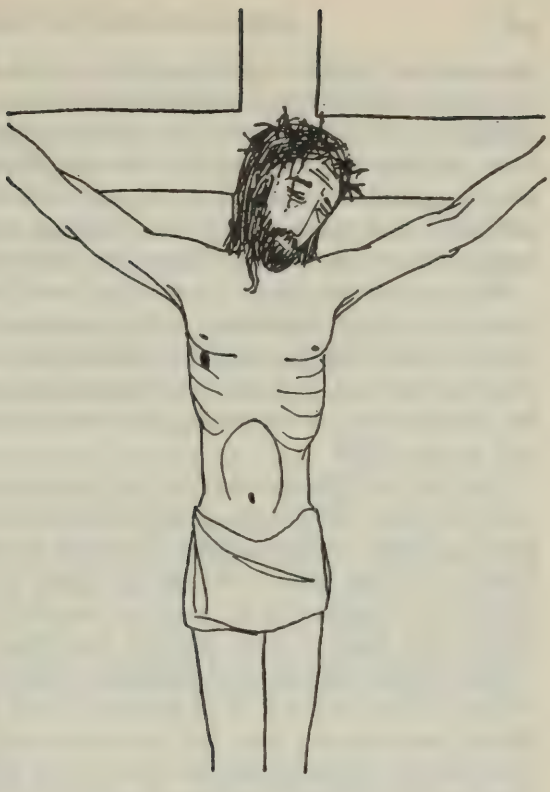
Nobody, really, goes directly to God. Everybody must go through certain channels and in some service to fellowmen. The way to God for husband and wife is through each other and their children, and in love of them and service to them. That is why it is a fruitful meditation to think of one's own son or daughter on the cross.

Our sons and daughters are given to us in order that we may help them to salvation, and they us. A parent thinking of one of his children

on the cross can come closer to Christ, can understand much more of what Christ suffered for us, can be more intimately united with Christ in His Passion. And certainly the parent can better understand, while thinking of his own child crucified, what Mary sacrificed for us.

In this kind of meditation, parents can find the true wisdom of marriage and the family. Making the Way of the Cross, and thinking of their beloved own children, they can more clearly and poignantly think of Christ, and love Christ and thank Him for His goodness.

Then, returning home, a husband can look upon his wife and children, or a wife upon her husband and children, and see Christ in them, and grasp something of the nobility and the deep goodness of Christian marriage and family life.



XII - JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS

THE HARSH WORD you spoke to your wife . . . the nagging you inflicted on your husband . . . the feud you had with your neighbor . . . the impatient blow you struck one of your children, or the loveless punishment to which you subjected him because he did something that annoyed you. . . .

These are among the things for which Christ died, and for which Mary, in intolerable anguish, watched Him die. These things are not the least of the things that scourged Him and crowned Him with thorns, and hung Him on the Cross. They are not the least of the things that condemned Our Lady to stand helpless before Him, unable to ease His pain, to comfort His heart, to wipe away the blood from His face that His nailed hands could not touch.

Oh, we are angry, and rightly angry, over the inhumanities, the

abominations, inflicted upon men and women and children, and upon the cardinals and bishops and priests of Christ, by the Stalins and the Hitlers and the Titos. But usually there is nothing that we can directly do to stop that sort of thing. It is not so with the inhumanities that we commit against those nearest to us—our own fathers and mothers, our own wives and husbands, our own children and neighbors. Those inhumanities, we can do something about. We can stop them.

We complain, too, about the attacks of anti-Catholics upon the Church —the lies they tell about her, the preposterous charges they voice, the calumnies and slanders and insinuations they publish. Sometimes we can do something to correct such situations, and sometimes we can't. But always we can do something about our own coldness to Christ. And cold we are. Cold!

Each day the Church offers us the Mass; offers us the opportunity to join with Mary and Joseph, with the angels and saints, in adoring and thanking Christ as He immolates Himself again for us. Are we there? How few are present in the parish church each morning! How few families are represented by even one member! And why are we not represented? Because we are slothful. Just plain slothful.

Sloth is that insidious, that sneaking, that small and mean and cheap weakness which counsels us to be careless and indolent about spiritual things. Sloth whispers to us that we need our sleep; that we are too tired to rise twenty or thirty minutes earlier in the morning in order to be at Mass. What a thieving and lying thing is sloth, and how it deludes us into depriving ourselves, through our own fault, of riches beyond the wildest power of words to describe!

Each day the Church offers Communion to us; offers Christ Himself to be the invigoration and the sanctification of our souls, the enlightenment of our minds—indeed, even the protection of our bodies, our families, our homes and our country. But sloth, that miserable thing, makes fools of us and leaves us lying abed, missing the greatest things that life can give to us.

We ask ourselves, when we stop to think, why did I quarrel with my wife or husband? Why was I short-tempered, even mean, perhaps even cruel, with the children? Why did I fall into this sin or that sin? Why am I so petty, so uncharitable, so quick to pride and anger and vanity? Why do I complain about everything, and appreciate almost nothing?

Why am I unhappy? Why do I not walk through life singing and smiling, uplifted by the beauty of things? Why am I short and surly with the woman I love and the children I love—with the very persons who, if they were dead before me, my heart would be broken, my life would be desolated?

Why, why, why? The answer is immediately at hand. The answer is our failure, through laziness and self-indulgence, to take advantage of the sources of grace that would transform our souls into shining things, that would open our minds and hearts to the nobility of existence.

The Mass is there, Holy Communion is there, the Sacrament of Penance is there, the Blessed Sacrament is there, the Stations of the Cross are there, the Rosary is within reach whenever we want to stretch out our hands to it.

Christ died to redeem us and to offer us holiness. He died in a world-shaking agony to try to drive home to us the great lesson of what we are. He died to try to make us see ourselves as He sees us. And how does Christ see us?

Let us look at ourselves through the eyes of Christ. What was it God said when He created us? "Let us make man to our image and likeness."

Now, everything that exists is a reflection of God. The sunset, the flowers reflect His beauty. The wind, the waterfall reflect His power. The mountains, and great seas, reflect His majesty. The night sky, the stars, the blazing sun, the moon, the trees, the rocks and sands, the animals and insects, the corn growing on the prairie, the tomato ripening on the vine, the worm industriously fertilizing the soil—all reflect something of God's infinite perfection.

God said, "Let us make man to our image and likeness." And He gathered up in man something of all these reflections. From all the created kingdoms he took a part of man, so that when Adam and Eve stood before Him, all creation stood there. Man is mineral, man is vegetable, man is sensitive like the animals, man is spiritual. The nobility of man's nature is beyond the power of words to express fully. And yet this, all this, is only a beginning.

On the Cross, Christ took man and added the divine. Through His sacraments, He supernaturalizes the inexpressible natural nobility of man. Man now becomes God's own son and daughter; we are made princes and princesses of Christ's eternal and infinite kingdom.

Why, it would not be too much to say that angels are stricken with awe at the sight of us, because we are filled with Christ, we are temples of the Holy Spirit, and in us the Son of Man and the Son of God takes up His abode, as He promised, with the Father and the Holy Ghost.

This, then, is a Christian. This is a baptized man or woman. This is one who can walk into the House of God, and go forward toward the altar, and receive the Risen Christ, true God and yet true man—our Creator, our Redeemer and our Brother—for food and drink for the soul. That is what we are; and yet we snap at one another, we fill our homes

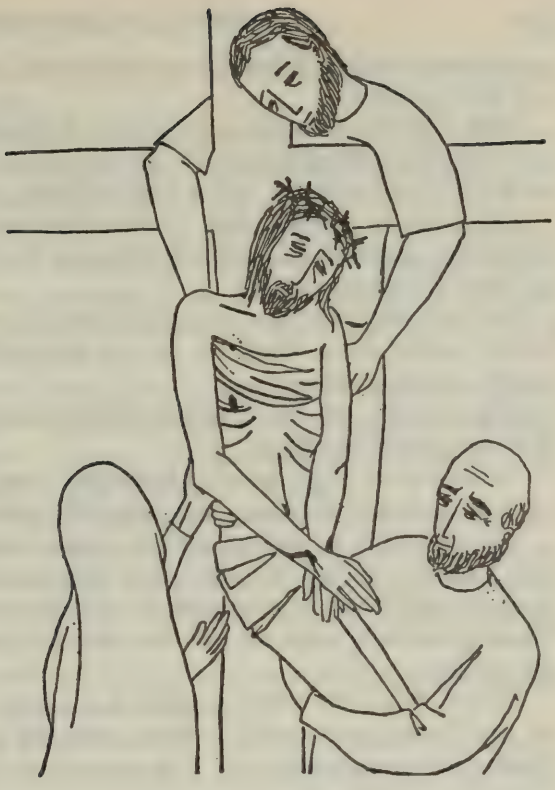
with disputes and contentions, with grabbings, with jealousies and suspicions, with ungodliness and inhumanities toward one another.

What preposterous foolishness! What imbecility!

No; we cannot talk around it; we cannot refuse to face it. Christ dying on the Cross is dying to make us like unto Him; to make our homes like the House at Nazareth; to make our families like the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. There is no use in our sitting around telling ourselves that sanctity is for monks and hermits, for priests and Brothers and Sisters. Yes, sanctity is for them; but sanctity is for us, too.

It is our business, we who are husbands and wives and children, we who are family and home people—it is our business to Christize ourselves and our houses and our neighborhoods. That is the business that we ought to be about. If we were about it as we ought to be, gradually we would Christize all the world; we would create world peace; we would disarm and harmonize the nations.

The Mass and the Sacraments are there at our beck and call, to give us the power and wisdom and zeal we need. Only one thing remains: Are we going to do something about it, or are we going to leave untapped, or hardly touched, the power that would flow to us from Christ Crucified if only we would open our hearts to it?



XIII - JESUS IS TAKEN DOWN FROM THE CROSS

I THINK THAT WHEN a faithful Catholic dies, there is much less reason for fear, and much more reason for rejoicing than most of us imagine.

The trouble is that we do not really grasp the greatness of being a Catholic. We do not realize what tremendous things we accomplish merely by doing our duty.

For instance, it does not seem to me that the mortal sinfulness of deliberately missing Mass on Sundays consists only in the absence of the one person. Missing Mass is much worse than that.

Each new Catholic is a new means by which Christ carries forward through time and space His divine mission of redeeming mankind and making mankind holy.

Each Catholic is an instrument which Christ has the right to use in His work. Each Catholic is a new tongue with which Christ can speak,

a new heart through which He can love, a new pair of hands which He can join in prayer.

Each Catholic, in truth, is a new pair of shoulders with which Christ can carry the cross of the world's sin. Each of us is a new body and soul in which Christ can live, and in which Christ can die.

The Catholic at Mass, then, is not merely one person giving to God the honor, adoration and gratitude which he owes to God. The Catholic at Mass is a *representative.*

Just as Christ took upon Himself the burdens of all of us, surely each of us, caught up in Christ as we are, must take upon ourselves the burdens of many others.

We must act, too, for those who do not know—or do not care—that they too should be acting.

When I am at Mass, how do I know how many hundreds or thousands or even millions of pagans are mystically present with me at Mass?

I do not mean to suggest that the pagans realize anything like this. No; I mean only that my presence at Mass, and my reception of Communion, might well be so pleasing to God that in return He will shower blessings not only upon me, but also upon millions of those who do not know Him.

Indeed, this is not merely possible; it is highly probable. The presence of the Church in the world is what constantly prevents mankind from lapsing into unspeakable vice. The presence of the Church is what protects the world from being cursed by God. The presence of the Church continually exerts persuasion for the transformation of the world into the kind of world that God meant it to be.

It seems to me, then, that the gravity of the sin of missing Mass on Sunday does not arise merely from the fact that one person is absent, but that this one person who ought to be winning God's favor for many others is neglecting not only his own spiritual welfare, but theirs also.

He is hampering Christ's work among men. And hampering Christ's work is not the proper activity of a Christian. It is gravely contrary to the right Christian activity.

Now we cannot have a great negative without a great positive. If it is mortally sinful deliberately to miss Mass on Sunday without a legitimate reason—and it is—then obviously assisting at Mass on Sunday must be a work of great merit.

If being absent can imperil us with hell, as it does, then being present must carry us a long step forward toward heaven.

Why should it not be so? We belong to Christ by baptism and confirmation; Christ lives in us and works in and through us. At Mass we unite ourselves with Christ in worshipping and praising the eternal

Father. We are caught up in Christ, we are offered with Him when He offers Himself in the Mass.

How can it be otherwise than that graces and merits are showered upon the sincere and devout Catholic at Mass—merits and graces piled up, pressed down and running over?

No; the Catholic doing his duty in life, whether at Mass or Communion, at home, at work, in civil life or wherever, is pleasing to God in very great measure. Every moment of his life, if he clings to the state of grace or regains it promptly in confession if it should be lost, he is walking toward God in heaven.

That is why I say that I think there is much more reason for rejoicing than most of us imagine at the time of the death of a faithful Catholic.

The faithful Catholic is a person who has lived in Christ, and Christ in him. This truth tends to grow dim in our minds.

We see the person's faults; perhaps even we see his virtues. But the one thing we cannot see is the one thing that is important in life—grace.

If our friend who has departed was in the state of grace, in the friendship of God, then obviously his death calls not for wailing, but for rejoicing.

Surely we cannot sorrow over the fact that some one loved has stepped into joys such as the mind cannot imagine!

But I do not mean to suggest that we can escape from our humanity. Certainly we will always be saddened by every parting from those close to us. Certainly we will be most saddened by the long parting of death.

We must expect that; we must endure it; we must carry it as one more of the crosses that God laid upon us in order that we might earn eternity with Him.

But even as we sorrow, we ought also to rejoice. Deep in our consciousness there should be a keen realization that the death of a faithful Catholic cannot be a disaster. It cannot be other than a tremendous triumph.

This, indeed, is what being a Catholic means; it means, in St. Paul's phrase, that as we were buried with Christ in baptism, so will we rise with Christ.

This, then, is the only question we have to ask ourselves—the only question of ultimate importance: "Is Christ living in me—am I living in Christ?"

If we can honestly say that we believe the answer to be yes—if a yes answer is the thing we desire with all our hearts—then it seems to me that we need not waste any of our time or energy upon worries about death.

Death will come when God permits it to come, and not before; and

if we are Christ's own when it comes, then it cannot come otherwise than as the one truly tremendous and permanent victory of our life.

If death finds us living in Christ, and Christ in us—as ought to be the case with any faithful Catholic—then like Christ we will be laid in the arms of Mary after we have breathed our last; and what is held in the arms of Mary is forever safe.

XIV - JESUS IS LAID IN THE TOMB

THERE ARE TWO LITTLE words, familiar and dear to Catholics, which to many outside the faith appear to be a contradiction in terms.

"Happy death."

How can death be happy when it is rending of the deepest depths of a human being; when it means a venturing alone into the unknown, and a leaving behind of a part of one's very nature?

Is not there something downright ghoulish about the thought of finding joy in this frightful separation of a man or woman into two parts—this death and dissolution of one part, and this flight of another part to what future we know not?

The answer would be yes, and the pagans would be right, were it not for one fact. Joy and happiness do not reside in the body; they reside in the soul. And the soul cannot die.

The soul, therefore, that is prepared for death cannot be deprived

of its happiness, not even in this terrible moment of the tearing apart of human nature.

A happy death indeed is possible. We know that as a matter of divine revelation, and we know it by human experience. We have seen the saints die, and they died happily. We have heard the saints praying for death because they could not wait for the joys that lay in store for them.

We have read how St. Therese of Lisieux longed for this moment that most people dread, and how she promised with joy to spend her heaven doing good on earth.

St. Therese knew that now at last she was really going to begin to live and to rejoice, and to have powers for serving her fellowmen which she did not have in her life on this earth, for all her holiness.

St. Therese was a real realist. Courageously she had embraced with her mind and her heart the whole truth about herself and about her true reason for existing.

Death did not pounce upon St. Therese from behind; it did not catch her unaware. St. Therese went happily to meet death because she had never fooled herself about its inevitability.

To her, death was the goal toward which she had been running and struggling from childhood; and beyond it lay all the rewards of her great efforts.

Like Job, she had stored up in her heart the fact of death, the fact of entrance into heaven through the opening of death, and the fact that death is not permanent but transitory. Like Job, she had her faith in the resurrection and the moment when she would see God not alone with her soul, but with the eyes of her body, glorified and restored to her.

St. Therese knew profoundly what life is all about and what death is all about. She did not attempt to evade reality; she embraced it, hugged it to her, met all its demands open-eyed, with a heart like a lion.

Is it necessary that we rise to the heights of St. Therese in order that our death may be happy?

Not at all. St. Therese was heroic; so heroic that if there were a stronger word than heroic, we would have to use it.

Heroism means rising above and beyond the call of duty. It means doing far more than is merely necessary. The holiness of the Little Flower of Jesus was not simply enough for her own salvation; it was so great that it showered—and still showers—blessings upon countless others.

It is not required of us that we soar to such heights of spirituality. It is not even expected of us. "Many are called but few are chosen"—that much-disputed biblical passage might well be applied here for our illumination.

We are all called to salvation; comparatively few are chosen for tower-

ing sanctity. God's dispensing of grace is a mystery of His own wisdom and good pleasure; but one thing we know as a truth of faith—to each of us He gives sufficient grace to be saved.

I think we may be certain, too, that to every Catholic God gives the opportunity for much more than merely sufficient grace.

We have the Mass. We have the Holy Eucharist, Confession, Matrimony and the other sacraments. We have the sacramentals. We are members of the Mystical Body of Christ, so that you might say that His mind constantly thinks in our minds and His heart beats with ours.

If we live in the state of sanctifying grace, He lives in us always, and with Him the Father and the Holy Spirit.

There is no good reason at all for any Catholic to have other than a happy death.

Indeed, there is really no good reason for any honest and sincere person to have other than a happy death.

The only possible reason is a bad reason—failure to cooperate with God's grace, refusal to live according to the light and the grace that God gives.

But the Catholic!—what countless opportunities are his to increase the grace in his soul, to grow daily in holiness, to make of death not a defeat, but a triumph; not a catastrophe to be feared, but a goal to be victoriously crossed; not a terrible darkness into which to step, but a glorious light into which to advance with confidence.

This is the meaning which the Fourteenth Station of the Cross is intended to convey to us.

Christ is placed in the tomb. The body of Christ, broken by his executioners, is laid to rest. But this is not a disaster; this is the moment of triumph. Christ's body is buried only to await its reunion with Christ's soul, its glorification, and its eternal rising in life and power on the third day.

Christ died for one reason; to prepare the way for us. His death is our salvation, our redemption. His death is the happiness of our death. He did not leave us; He remains tirelessly with us in His Church, in His Sacraments; and above all, at the time of death, in His sacrament of Extreme Unction.

"The Anointing Unto Glory," this sacrament has been called by some of the saints. And that, precisely, is what it is.

The Anointing is nothing less than Christ with us as we breathe our last, waiting to take our hand and lead us into the eternal joys.

The Catholic who in life faces the inevitable fact of death, and by fidelity to the Mass, the sacraments and the Commandments makes ready for it—that Catholic does not die alone.

He dies in Christ, and simultaneously lives in Christ. His body closes its tired eyes, and his soul instantly is in Christ's company, because Christ is there in the sacraments with him.

Happy death, indeed! What else can it be, when we have made our last confession, and received our final Holy Communion, and been Anointed in the sacrament which has for its special purpose our immediate entrance into the life of God?

Death is happy for those who have faced death in life, and have made themselves ready for it by using the means that Christ provided. For these, death is a going to sleep in the arms of Our Lady in order that she can awake us and present us joyously to her divine Son.

The Fourteenth Station points to the fact of death, but above all it points farther along, to the fact of eternal life and the fact of the resurrection in glory. What it should impress deeply upon us is that unless we are fools, we will live with Christ in order to die and rise with Him.

THREE WHO VENTURED

by Myles Connolly

DENNIS

An Excerpt

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Dennis

1

IT IS MANY years ago now but I can still remember almost to the last detail that autumn evening, at Matt Easter's on the Pacific Coast Highway a few miles north of Santa Monica, when I first saw Dennis, tall, thin, bearded, slightly stooped, as he approached our booth to serve the wine.

He came to the table with a sort of humility, as if he were serving heroes and not Matt Easter and me, carrying the wine, a very ordinary California Burgundy, cradled in a basket, with such care and graciousness I was sure for a moment Matt had got his hands on some fine wine of precious vintage. He wore a black suit, very shiny and a little frayed, a white shirt and a white cotton wash tie, and this rather unusual apparel seemed completely proper to him, as if he had grown in it from his early youth. It was, in the few days I knew him, the only apparel I ever saw him wear.

He poured the wine ritualistically, giving Matt, my host, a little in his glass, then waiting for him to taste it.

"Fine," Matt said. "Okay."

"Thank you, sir." Dennis bowed appreciatively, a small smile lighting his face. His was a reflective, perceptive smile, not a smile of mere pleasantness, and it seemed almost always on his face.

He filled my glass, then added to Matt's glass until it was full, set the bottle down gently, bowed appreciatively again and withdrew.

I watched him walk away in his slightly stooped graciousness. Matt was studying my face, I knew, waiting for a reaction.

"Collected another character, I see." I turned back to Matt.

"Came in here in the rain one night about a week ago," Matt said.

"He got off the Greyhound bus out in front on the highway. Said he liked the look of the ocean from here. So I gave him a job."

I sipped the wine. "He's a very interesting addition to your little private madhouse, Matt."

"He had never worked in a café," Matt went on, "but he had a simplicity about him that fascinated me so I created a job for him. Wine steward. How do you like that?"

"It was inevitable, Matt. Once you hired that French hitchhiker for a chef, the next step was a wine steward. How is the chef doing, by the way?"

"He's a little slow on learning to cook," Matt explained. "But he certainly knows his Voltaire."

"Tell me more about the wine steward. You will begin importing shiploads of fine wines now, I'm sure?"

Matt nodded. "Put in a big order yesterday. Champagne and everything. Carpenters are coming tomorrow to build an addition to the pantry with sloping shelves and special bins and the rest of it. My only regret is we have no cellar. Still I can call the pantry addition a wine cellar. The poetry of the event surely permits me some license with words."

"I don't suppose your wine steward knows anything about wine?"

"Not a damn thing. But I got him some books. He's learning. He has the greatest respect for wine. Yet, funny thing, he's a teetotaler."

I poured Matt and me more wine. "Strange place for him around here," I said.

Matt grinned. "I warned him. I told him the café was pretty much a rendezvous for tipplers. I told him I was an alcoholic myself." He leaned over, lowered his voice. "He's the sort of fellow you tell the truth to. He wasn't shocked. His smile went for a moment, that's all. And do you know what he said? He said, 'The alcoholic is given his purgatory here. What anguish after folly. What despair. What a cross he has chosen for himself on earth.' That's what he said."

I looked over to where Dennis was humbly and graciously serving wine at another booth.

"That's extraordinary talk even for this place, Matt," I said. "He sounds religious."

"Every morning around daybreak he gets up and goes out. I see him sometimes when I am going to bed. He's a strange duck." Matt joined me in watching Dennis. "He gives me the impression he walks with the daybreak around him all day."

"At night too," I added.

"He's a puzzler all right. I don't know whether Dennis is his first

name or his last name or whether it is his name at all. He gives no hints about his past or background. He's evidently well educated."

"Looks and acts like an Oxford don."

"Don't let that narrow, brown beard of his fool you. In most ways he's as American as a Down-East country store. Why do you suppose he ever took a job like this? It can't be money. He refuses all tips. He seemed embarrassed when I gave him his first pay."

"My first guess would be alcohol," I said. "My second, dope."

Matt shook his head. "He doesn't even smoke."

"Maybe he's mad."

"I've thought of that. But that smile, that throws me. There's no lunacy behind that."

I studied Dennis again. "Yes, he's sane. I'm sure," I said.

"When I think I have him pegged," Matt went on, "he will come out and say the damndest things, fantastic things. Early this evening I discovered him in the kitchen deeply concerned about some wine that had been spilled from a bottle. I told him not to worry about it, not to be so reverential about it. It was just ordinary wine. Do you know what he said? He turned gravely to me and said, 'Mr. Easter, there is no such thing as ordinary wine, not since God chose wine to be His blood.'" Matt drained his glass of wine. "What do you think of that?"

"Maybe he is mad after all," I said.

2

PERHAPS a word or two about Matt Easter and his place might not be amiss before going on with Dennis.

Matt had in his youth been a copywriter for an advertising agency in mid-Manhattan. He was good at it and had done well. One of his accounts was a group of orange growers in Southern California. After a while, oranges became a pleasurable fixation with him. He lived oranges, so to speak. He, who had never seen an orange tree, save perhaps a dwarf plant in a Madison Avenue florist's window, now beheld the deep green growing on the trees, smelled the fragrant blossoms, watched the colorful fruit appear, followed it through to the golden harvest. His words, colorful as the illustrations that went with them, came to life on the glossy pages of a hundred magazines.

Matt looked down on the magazine pages, read his words over and over, and a feeling grew in him that he had somehow had a part in the

creation of, if not the orange tree, at least the orange industry. It became therefore a common pastime for him (aided by the magazine illustrations) to picture himself sitting in a colorful sport shirt on the veranda of a red-tiled stucco ranch house looking down over a great orange grove, gold and dark green in the sun.

One bright May morning, as was inevitable, he being Matt Easter, he resigned his job, took his not inconsiderable savings and boarded an airplane for California. In a month he was proprietor of an orange grove in the Los Angeles area. He had a red-tiled, stucco ranch house and he sat in his sport shirt on the veranda and looked down on his orange grove, gold and dark green in the sun.

Matt was not, however, as successful growing oranges as he had been growing words about them. Every bug and blight in the book were soon drawn to his trees. His crops grew poorer. His trees grew more and more barren. His investment dwindled. But, as often happens in Southern California, while the value of his orange grove was growing less, the value of his land was growing greater.

A new highway was built along his property. Two real estate developers fought to acquire Matt's land. The bids rose and finally Matt, in an equitable mood, sold half the grove to one developer and half to the other, and happily retired. He had tripled his investment.

Matt was a tall, huge man, a good six feet two inches in height, with a deep fondness for food and drink. His palate was above ordinary although he was no epicure. He grew tired of dining out. Being a bachelor he could not endure dining home. But being, further, a man of great faith in his imagination, he hit on what he considered an easy solution to his problem. He would buy a restaurant, be always his own guest, be a host when it pleased him, and thus enjoy both the pleasure of dining home and dining out.

His fancy was caught by a little place, a small café with rooms above it, built on stilts out over the surf on the Pacific Coast Highway. It had a "seagoing look," he said. He bought it for twice what it was worth, painted it red, brown and yellow inside and out, hung some white-washed life preservers here and there, and, as a last touch, put up a gold-lettered sign describing the place rather incongruously as: *Chez Easter*. Nobody, however, ever called it *Chez Easter*. It was known simply as Matt's place.

But if anyone thought for a moment because it had a sign, *Chez Easter*, out in front it was wide open for business, he was headed for disillusionment. There were some six booths and eight tables in the restaurant. On each table in the booths and on the floor there stood a

small gold-and-black sign with the word *Reserved*. And reserved is exactly what Matt meant.

The first booth was exclusively Matt's booth and he invariably occupied it by himself or with guests. He was always the host at this table (and sometimes at other tables as well) and when he was host he considered it unbecoming for the check even to be mentioned. "You wouldn't ask to pay if you were dining at my house, would you?" he would always say.

From this booth, Matt had command of the entrance door. Charlie, the waiter, would hold up any possible customer until a signal from Matt—a glass raised to admit—was given. Matt had mysterious standards for admittance, most of them being unknown to anyone but himself and, sometimes, it seemed, unknown to himself as well. Poetic intuition is what he depended on, he maintained. He would be more likely to admit a derelict in rags than a man of affairs in white tie and tails. He had an intense and constant dread of practical people.

I must say that the customers he selected were, more often than not, interesting and even entertaining. Quite a few of them were parasites, of course, but Matt did not mind that if they amused or diverted him. He also had a great weakness for ladies of the evening, romanticizing them beyond ordinary discretion, seeing all of them as soft of heart, victims of the callousness of mankind.

It can easily be discerned then that Matt's place was more of a private club than a restaurant. He kept no books, knew nothing about such things as unemployment insurance or social security, and his only knowledge of income tax was that he took a loss each year. This loss he considered a sort of triumph and gloated over it.

There is no mystery as to how the restaurant was run at a loss. Seldom were more than three or four tables permitted to be occupied. I have sat in the main booth with Matt night after night for a week without seeing the *Reserved* sign taken from a table once. No glass was lifted in approval. No customer at the entrance had satisfied the demands of Matt's poetic intuition.

I was the chief of Matt's guests, which made me therefore the chief of his parasities though that did not occur to me at the time. Matt was about forty, some fifteen years older than I, and seemed to me very old and very wise. He would say things like, "The Good Book tells us to love our enemies but I say let us begin by trying to love our friends," or with a drink he would give a toast such as, "Let us be worthy of our sins!" and such sayings of his would appear to me to be profound and original.

"I like poets," Matt would say. "Only poets know the infinite value

of the immediate and fleeting moment. That's why I like you, son. You are a poet."

If Matt meant I liked to sit hours on end talking and drinking with no regard for the morrow, then Matt was right about my dedication to the immediate moment. I think the truth is Matt was always lonely after nightfall and needed a good listener and I was, I suppose, a good listener.

Matt's hospitality was very welcome to me in those days. I was two years out of college and working on a Santa Monica newspaper. I was no adventurous reporter with a thousand tales to tell. I was merely an odd-jobs man around the office, a combination rewrite man and office boy.

But I did have what might be called a poetic side and being young I had, of course, my dream of greatness. I lived in a shack in the Malibu Hills a few miles from Matt's place. It was very primitive, this shack, with an outhouse and with such running water as would run supplied from a roof tank which had to be filled by a water service company from time to time. But the shack, with the dappled-black, cinnamon-brown higher hills rising steeply into the sky behind it and with the gray-blue-green Pacific spreading vastly before it, had a startling and inspiring view. It was this view that prompted me to rent the shack. Here my dreams of greatness were to come true.

I had, at the time, the idea that I should write the epic story of California in dithyrambic blank verse. The primitive shack in the hills was the very place for me to work on the heroic poem in my spare time. Thanks to Matt, and, in smaller measure, to my own indolence, I never wrote a line. It could be that publishers' readers everywhere have reason to be grateful.

I'm afraid, looking back, that my only distinction then was that Matt considered me another of his characters.

3

THE NEXT night when I joined Matt in the first booth, Matt was talking to Roland, the itinerant Frenchman he had plucked from the highway and, in his imagination, had turned into a chef. Roland cut a striking figure, standing before Matt, a lofty, thin six feet, in a long loose apron, with a chef's hat like a great rumpled white muffin adding another eight

or ten inches to his height. His long, narrow, sallow face, like a drawn single piece of copper, gave him a slightly malevolent air.

Matt was patiently explaining to his chef how he wanted a little mashed banana added to the potatoes, just so much and no more. The chef listened distantly from his great height.

Matt realized he was not making much progress. "Roland," he said, "for two weeks now there has always been too much banana or too little in the potatoes. What is the solution?"

"Cut out the banana," Roland replied with a crisp accent.

Matt laughed. "That is your trouble, Roland. Always too much or too little. I don't know why I keep you. Do you?"

"I am your conscience," Roland replied crisply again. Then, tilting his head back in severe importance, he turned sharply and went back to the kitchen.

Matt was entertained. "The Gallic mind at its best. I am very grateful for him."

I sat down opposite Matt. "He seems rude to me. What does he mean —he is your conscience? I don't get that."

"He is right," Matt replied. "He is my conscience. That's why I cannot let him go."

Dennis approached, carrying a cradled bottle of wine with his customary graciousness.

Matt continued, "Roland is a man of cold intellect. He is an agnostic and yet an ascetic. I am a Catholic and yet I am a libertine and a drunkard. Roland is here to keep me from forgetting my weaknesses, to remind me of my sins." He turned up to Dennis who now, his little smile on his face, waited to pour the wine. "Dennis, my life is dedicated to self-indulgence. I have no virtues. I am damned."

"You are generous, Mr. Easter." Dennis bowed ever so slightly. "Generosity is next to godliness."

"But I'm generous because I like to be generous. It is another form of self-indulgence, Dennis."

"A higher form, Mr. Easter. Holiness too is a higher form of self-indulgence, a transcendentally high form of self-indulgence."

Matt laughed. "You are very consoling, Dennis. You must never leave me."

Dennis bowed. "Thank you, sir. It is a privilege to be here."

He poured the wine ritualistically as he had the night before and went back to the kitchen. I was completely fascinated by him.

Matt held up his glass of wine. "He's a character all right."

"Your best, Matt," I said.

Charlie, the waiter, came to the booth. Charlie was a gray elfin sort

of man with that air of constant optimism that usually adorns horse players. Charlie had a system for betting on the horses. He used astrology, carefully casting the horoscopes of all the horses and jockeys in a given race. His system kept Charlie busy, much busier than did the café with its reserved tables. It also provided him with a limitless source of hope. His horses rarely won.

Charlie had come to the booth to announce that Gloria, one of Matt's ladies, was outside. Gloria was always admitted, always treated royally, but because of her profession she was inclined to be diffident and always waited on Matt's invitation.

I had met Gloria on several occasions. She was in her late twenties, a husky brunette who featured a black lace headdress, like a small mantilla, black dresses and much deep red costume jewelry to match her deep red lipstick. I suppose she saw herself (or had at one time) as a sort of femme fatale. Her lips quivered until she had had a few drinks. Her dark brown eyes were cloudy and blue-circled, her face soft and slightly puffy.

Matt considered her quite pretty. "The older I get," he said, "the more convinced I am there is no beauty without pathos. It is the ruined village that sleeps most beautiful in the moonlight. It is its melancholy that makes autumn the most beautiful of seasons. It is the sorrowful madonnas who are the loveliest. It is pathos in a woman's eyes that gives her the most profound, the most appealing beauty."

Whether Matt actually believed this about Gloria or not, I do not know. Matt so liked ideas—conceits is perhaps a better word—so liked the feel of them, so liked to play with them that you could never be too sure how deep was his realization of what he said. Not that he was insincere. His devotion to his conceits was vigorous. It was his devotion to his conceit about oranges that originally brought him to California and to the ownership of an orange grove. It was his conceit about being a host or a guest as he chose that brought him to the ownership of a café. He was a happy host to Gloria because he liked to associate pathos and sadness with her.

Matt ordered Gloria a double bourbon over ice, her usual drink. Dennis served it. He served it graciously but not as ritualistically as he served wine.

I noticed Gloria as she discovered Dennis, saw the excitement that began to glow in her cloudy eyes. She did not take her gaze off him. She watched him while he served the bourbon, while he bowed and left. She watched him until he had disappeared into the shadows near the kitchen door.

The moment Dennis was out of view, she straightway drank down her entire drink.

"Who is that?" she asked making no effort to conceal her excitement. "Who is he?"

Matt explained how Dennis had appeared at the door in the rain one night a little more than a week before.

"That's for me," she said, her voice trembling. "He's beautiful. Let me have another drink."

Matt and I exchanged glances. We both had the same reaction. We were a little startled—startled and disconcerted is probably a better way of putting it—at this woman's sudden desire for Dennis. It was not merely astonishment that Gloria should consider the male animal anything but a client, as was her cool custom; it was a feeling this was impropriety on her part, indecency even. If she had shown any similar sudden infatuation for Matt or me, say, we would have considered her simply out of character, or, more likely, out of her mind. But for her to have an infatuation for Dennis, that was somehow wrong.

"Lay off him, honey," Matt said quietly.

"Why? I won't hurt him."

"It isn't that. He's . . ." Matt paused for the right words. "He doesn't seem that kind."

"All men are that kind," she replied intensely. "Only some are more so. I know."

"But he's poor, honey," Matt declared. "He can't afford you."

"I don't care. Maybe I can afford him. How about that drink, Matty?"

Matt ordered the drink from Charlie, a double bourbon again, and Dennis served it. He served graciously as he had served before. Again Gloria did not take her eyes off him.

After she had watched him go, she turned back to Matt and me. She was more excited than before. "My God," she whispered hoarsely, "imagine anything like this happening to me!"

She sipped her drink in tense silence for a minute, then drained the glass. Abruptly she got up and left the booth.

Matt and I, ill at ease, watched her go into the kitchen.

"Why don't you stop her?" I asked Matt.

He shook his head. "I'm sure Dennis will take care of himself. He is of the greatest innocence."

I was not so sure of Dennis. "She has a sort of evil charm to her," I said, "the sort of charm that is especially appealing to innocence."

Presently Dennis appeared serving wine at a nearby booth.

"You see," Matt said triumphantly.

But later when Matt called for new drinks, it was Charlie who brought them.

"Where's Dennis?" Matt asked.

"He went out with that hooker," Charlie said. "They went out to look at the ocean," he added with a wink.

Our chagrin must have showed on our faces. Charlie, misinterpreting Matt's reaction, said, "It's okay, Boss. There's no business." Then, leaning over, he whispered confidentially, "I got a nag, a sure one in the fifth at Bay Meadows tomorrow. A Scorpio."

Matt and I, who usually joked with Charlie about his horses, could only sit and stare at each other, unable even to manage a smile.

4

Matt and I sat alone in the café and drank and talked. We avoided with care any reference to Dennis or Gloria, a care prompted by our disillusionment with Dennis. We hardly knew him and yet strangely, vaguely, we felt as if he had that night failed us. Somehow he was for us a hero fallen. A flag on a distant and, I must admit, hazy rampart had been struck.

Matt was in a quiet mood. He talked about death. I am sure Dennis was responsible, however obscurely, for this change in him.

"I am going to get myself a skull," he said after a long silence and considerable wine, "a human skull, a fine, highly polished human skull and keep it here on this table before me."

"*Memento mori*," I said.

"No. *Memento vivere* or however the Latin should go. Remember we must live. You've heard those stories about people who go to physicians and are told they have only six months or a year to live and how they then begin to discover the startling loveliness and surprise in the ordinary things around them: a human face, a breaking wave, a dragonfly, the morning star, a friend's voice, a shadow pattern in the late afternoon sunlight, all the myriad things they had not really seen or heard before. It is the man given a few months before the adventure of death who realizes best the adventure of life."

I could not help being a little amused at his unaccustomed solemnity.

"I want the skull before me," Matt went on, "I want death on the table here before me to increase my capacity for living. With every glass of wine I shall remember death, and every glass of wine will be that

much sweeter to me. The food will be more succulent. The coming of dusk will be more moving and beautiful. With the skull before me, I shall see life as it is, startling, inexplicable except in terms of death. With the skull before me each immediate moment will be more surprising and more precious. I shall be more mystified and therefore more diverted, more humble and therefore more grateful. Right now, with merely the thought of the skull, the polished skull, on the table before me, I feel a sudden inspiration of gratitude for your presence and friendship."

I thanked him but he hardly heard.

He mused a moment. "What would you think if I had here the skull of a once beautiful woman, a woman of disciplined passion, a disturbing, life-giving woman? She would not only dramatize the present moment, she would give it the melancholy, the pathos of womanly beauty forever gone, the melancholy and pathos without which there is no supreme beauty."

This was an old theme of his and he sensed my awareness of the fact.

"You aren't finding this morbid or depressing, are you?" he asked.

I shook my head. "No, I too am looking for the kingdom of the absolute," I said.

This pleased him as I had an idea it would.

"Good," he said. "Very good. Beauty is a mystery. It must always be strange. And if it is true beauty, its strangeness, its eternally baffling, eternally impenetrable strangeness will always be a source of pleasant melancholy. Man and supreme beauty is a love affair that can never end in marriage. It is a union that can never be consummated."

"Maybe it's better that way," I ventured to comment. "Man in love with beauty will thus never be surfeited."

He smiled, pleased. "You grow in wisdom," he said.

Roland, now without his chef's hat and apron but still tall and important, approached from the kitchen.

"The kitchen is closed," he announced.

"Fine," Matt said. "Thank you. I'm sorry you hadn't come out sooner, Roland. We've been talking about the skull of a beautiful woman and the pathos of beauty."

There was an air of superiority about Roland as he said, "You live by your emotions, Mr. Easter. You shall die by them."

Roland left the café. Matt watched him let himself out.

"I live by my emotions. I shall die by them. That is good, very good," Matt said. "He is truly my conscience."

"I wouldn't care for a conscience like that," I said.

Matt gave no heed to my remark. He talked on, elaborating further

this strangely solemn conceit of the skull on the table. The idea of the skull of a once beautiful woman especially enchanted him.

"It is one of my very best ideas," he said. "I shall find such a skull tomorrow. I know a place in town."

While he was talking, Gloria and Dennis appeared at the entrance. Dennis, gracious as usual, stood back and bowed her in.

Gloria turned and came directly to the booth. Dennis went on through the shadows into the kitchen. Gloria, frowning, sat down next to Matt. She sat there in sharp silence and stared into space, the frown hardening her soft face.

After a moment Matt said, "Like a drink, honey?"

"No. I don't want a drink." Her voice was angry. Presently, as an afterthought, she added, "A drink wouldn't do me any good."

Matt was pleased. "Looks like I was right."

"He's crazy," she whispered harshly, "crazy as a bedbug."

"Don't take it so hard, honey." Matt winked at me. "You're beautiful, Gloria, but you're not completely irresistible."

"Have you talked much with him?" She turned to Matt.

"Not as much as I'd like to."

"Well, talk to him some time. He looks like he's making sense, he acts like he's making sense, but half the time he isn't. He's tough to follow."

"He does talk strangely sometimes," Matt said.

"Strangely?" Gloria obviously considered that something of an understatement. "Why, when I sashayed up to him in the kitchen here to give him the business, I remarked, kind of polite-like, I hoped he didn't mind the intrusion. Do you know what he said? He said with that little bow he gives, he said, 'I'm very grateful for your speaking to me. I'm always grateful when anyone speaks to me. I don't deserve it.' What do you think of that?"

"It sounds like him," Matt said.

"Well, that threw me off balance right off," Gloria went on. "'I'm always grateful when anyone speaks to me.' That was too much for me. Later when we were out on the beach, he got talking even more fancy. I must say he was handsome out there in the moonlight. It seemed sometimes like the moonlight was inside of him. But the way he talked! He talked about someone he called his lady and he said the stars were his lady's jewels, and he talked like he believed it. The competition was too tough. I all but fell in his arms but he didn't make a pass at me. He'd have no part of me."

Matt nodded. "She's tough competition all right."

Gloria turned to him in surprise. "You know what he was talking about?"

"Distantly. Too distantly. Catholics call her the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God."

Gloria was clearly bewildered. "You think God has a Mother?"

"Mary was the mother of Jesus Christ who is God."

Gloria was more bewildered. "But Christ, he's the fellow they killed. You think some people killed God?"

"That's right, honey." Matt was gentle. "Some people killed God. It's hard to understand. It's hard for anyone to understand."

"Brother! I think you're nuts too, Matt. I'll take that drink!"

Matt went to the bar and came back with drinks for the three of us. Gloria drank her bourbon almost at once.

After the drink, she softened. "He's crazy the way I said," she said quietly. "Crazy as can be, but he's real beautiful. No one ever talked to me the way he did. Not even when I was a kid. He made me feel good and kind of important." Suddenly she began to sob. "I'm sorry, boys. I got to bawling out on the beach too. I told him I was no good. Do you know what he said? He said he wished he was as good as I was. I told him he didn't know the half of it. I told him what my business was. And he said—" she sobbed again—"he said I had a beautiful soul. You should have heard the way he said it. I felt new and young again."

She began to cry openly. "I love him! I guess I'm crazy too. But I love him!"

Abruptly she jumped up, left the booth and ran out of the café.

Matt and I sat in silence.

At that moment, as if on cue, Dennis came quietly out of the kitchen into the dark café.

It was an extraordinary appearance he made. In the dark, his body seemed faintly luminous, especially his face, as if he were carrying a hidden candle. It was startling. Matt and I stared wide-eyed at him.

Dennis bowed to us, said a courteous good night and went up the stairs that led to the rooms above. Spellbound, we watched him until the upstairs door closed behind him.

Matt turned to me. "Did you see what I saw?" he asked in a hushed voice.

"Fantastic," I said. "Looked like phosphorescence."

There was complete silence.

"There was a time when they'd probably call that the glow of sanctity," Matt finally spoke. "Could be it is." He got slowly to his feet. "Let's go over to the bar and get a drink."

5

THE NEXT night I was back at Matt's, in the first booth with him as usual. There were no customers, Matt's poetic intuition presumably having found none worthy of his favor this night. Also, I suspect, his mind, after the experience of the night before, was especially occupied with Dennis, as was mine, and he wanted no distractions.

Matt had the skull he had talked of already on the table. It was small, of a pale ivory color and highly polished and while the effect of it on the table before me was dramatic, the skull was not repulsive as I had thought it might be.

Matt looked pensively down on the skull.

"Woman?" I asked.

"So they told me. A young woman," Matt answered. "But I cannot find out if she was beautiful. We'll assume she was beautiful." He tapped the skull softly with his glass. "You were very beautiful, dear lady, beautiful with the great beauty that breeds heroes and destroys kingdoms. I am deeply in love with you." He raised his glass to his lips. "Now I begin to live!"

Dennis came and went with his customary graciousness. We made no comment on the phenomenon of the night before and if he saw any special curiosity on our faces, he gave no sign of it. He appeared to like the idea of the skull on the table as Matt explained it to him.

"It's too bad," Dennis said with his little smile, "we cannot have our own skulls on the table before us."

"A wonderful idea," Matt nodded.

We watched Dennis as he walked away from the booth.

"Could it ever be your Dennis is what you call a saint?" I suggested. "You have some such idea in the back of your head, don't you?"

Matt hesitated. "Saint is a precious word and should be applied only with the greatest of caution. Still, that phenomenon last night, I can't get it out of my mind."

"Could it ever also be," I suggested further, this time with a smile, "that Matt Easter is going religious?"

"I suppose," Matt nodded after a moment, "you could say since Dennis arrived I've become somewhat religious, though, I must say, only in a conversational way. He makes me feel important, as he did Gloria.

"Ordinarily the thought of the hundreds of millions of people crawling this planet appalls me. How in such a multitude of multitudes can one soul matter, I ask myself? But talking with Dennis, the millions

somehow cease to be masses. They become individuals. As he is. And I am one. I take on size. I no longer am appalled."

"Dennis does all that for you?" I asked in some surprise. I was well used to Matt's extravagant way of talking but at the moment he seemed to be beyond himself.

"That and more. When a man says, 'I'm grateful when anyone speaks to me,' as Dennis said to Gloria, you run head on into the extraordinary phenomenon of supernatural humility. You are shaken up. It might well be you will never be the same again. The universe begins to grow cozy and comfortable. The individual begins to grow large and radiant.

"And when I saw him as I did last night in the dark with the light of his unique individuality about him, I saw him, an almost nameless nobody, as someone superhumanly important. I felt warmth at being a member of the human race."

About this time, Gloria appeared at the entrance and was waved in by Matt. Her eyes intently searched the café for Dennis. He was not in sight.

"A double?" Matt asked her as she sat down beside him in the booth.

Gloria discovered the skull. She drew back in horror. "Is this real?" she whispered.

"Real as can be," Matt said easily. "Once belonged to a girl as beautiful as you, Gloria. About your age, too."

"Take it away, will you?"

"You'll get used to it," Matt smiled. "It's a very common object. We all have one, honey."

"Well, keep it away from me, will you, Matt?" There was pleading in her voice.

"We'll move it over here near the lamp."

Matt moved the skull over under the lamp near the wall. It was more highlighted, more striking there than before, but out of the way. "What you need is a drink, Gloria," he said. "How about that double?"

"No thanks."

"Single?"

She shook her head. "Nothing," she said tensely, obviously on edge. "I'm going to try and cut down on the stuff."

"Dennis?" Matt's eyes twinkled.

She turned on him angrily. "What are you always snooping into people's business for! You squat there half-crocked and squint down at the rest of us like we were all a lot of fleas in a flea circus! Who do you think you are anyway? You're for the zoo yourself, you ought to know that by now! Let me alone, will you?"

"I'm sorry, Gloria," Matt apologized. "I'm terribly sorry. I was impertinent."

At that instant, from the highway, came the sudden screech of automobile brakes jammed on, followed by the high, single, hysterical scream of a woman, then instantly by the abrupt, shocking crash of two cars colliding, crumpling, then silence.

We rushed to the door, Matt leading, I after him. Gloria followed fearfully. Roland came quickly, excitedly, out of the kitchen. Then Dennis appeared with his usual composure.

On the highway, two dark, heavy cars had apparently smashed into each other head on, and had been spun around so they were almost off of the highway. All lights on the cars were out and the two wrecks looked like huge crumpled black boxes in the dimly lit dark.

On the black pavement a few feet from the car nearer the café, the white figure of a woman lay on her side. She was moaning.

Matt ran back into the café to telephone the police. I moved on to the highway, followed by Roland. Gloria hung back and could be seen framed in the soft light of the doorway to the café.

A ranch wagon, approaching from the direction of Malibu, stopped on the highway. Its headlights illumined the ugly scene. More cars stopped from moment to moment and soon the highway was played on by many headlights.

I went to the woman on the pavement. She was quite young and wore a white evening dress. The white dress looked startling against the black of the pavement. I leaned over her and said as quietly as I could, "Take it as easy as you can, miss. The ambulance will be here in a few minutes."

She was trying to say something in her moaning but I could not make the words out.

Matt came back out from the café, joined us.

"She's trying to say something," I said to Matt. "I can't make it out."

Matt leaned over her.

"She wants a Catholic priest," he said tensely. "Go and ring the Catholic Church at Malibu, will you? Put the call through as an emergency. Hurry!"

Roland looked down at the woman on the pavement and shrugged. "It will be too late."

As I hurried back to the café, I met Dennis hurrying out.

He was fixing a purple stole around his neck.

He went to the woman and knelt down beside her, his black suit very black against the white of her dress. He made the sign of the cross over her and leaned close to her.

I could see he was hearing her confession.

Later we stood at the bar, Matt, Gloria and I.

Dennis had gone on to the hospital in the ambulance.

Gloria, putting her glass down, said, "I'm sorry, Matt, I bawled you out tonight."

"Forget it, honey," Matt said quietly.

"I've got to be going," Gloria said.

"You aren't going to wait till Dennis gets back?" Matt was surprised.

"I've made enough of a fool of myself as it is," Gloria answered.

She said good night and left.

"It's the damndest thing, isn't it," Matt said. "Dennis a priest. I can't wait till he gets back. I can't wait till I hear his story."

6

I was back at Matt's place the next night and was surprised to be met with a sign on the door reading, *Closed for Alterations.*

The door was open, however, and I pushed on in. The café was dark but there was a table light on in Matt's booth. He was sitting alone there reading a large black-bound book with red-edged pages. The book was propped up against the skull on the table.

"I left the door open for you," Matt said.

"What alterations are you planning?" I asked with an effort at lightness as I sat down. "Going to add more reserved tables so you will have more empty chairs?"

"The alterations are to be in me. I hope." He solemnly closed the book. "I've had quite a time of it, quite a night, quite a day."

"Dennis ever show up?"

He paused, then added quietly. "No, Dennis never did come. Nor will he."

"Perhaps he stayed on at the hospital," I suggested, though at heart I shared the finality of Matt's judgment.

"I telephoned. He's gone. I have a very definite idea he's again on a Greyhound bus again bound for nowhere."

"He may be hitch-hiking from Santa Monica." I tried to be helpful.

He shook his head sadly. "He could have walked from Santa Monica by this time. No. If he had any intention of returning I would have heard from him." He coughed to clear the emotion from his voice. "I can tell you, son, it's been quite a day. The place has been empty, empty. I miss him."

I looked around the dark café. "I miss him too. He was a character."

"He was more than a character," Matt said with intensity. "He changed the quality of my feeling, of my thinking. Without his presence the café has become an enormous vacuum. I feel small and unimportant. I feel crowded again, stooped. I feel complicated. I do not know what Dennis' life story is but I do know he somehow achieved timeless living and he could share his achievement with others.

"This afternoon I went to his room in the wild hope he had slipped in without my seeing him. The room was bare except for this book. The bed was neatly made. In the dresser I found a white cotton shirt, a pair of nylon shorts, a pair of cotton socks, a razor, a toothbrush, a tube of shaving cream, a tube of toothpaste, a cheap brush and comb, two clean handkerchiefs and nothing else. All his possessions could have been carried in a paper bag, as they were when first I saw him.

"Earlier this evening I went back up to his room to see if I could find any trace of an address or any indication of his identity on his clothes. I found none, nothing."

"You have the memory of him," I said, trying, lamely, I'll admit, to console him.

"What a poor bromide that is," Matt said quietly. "The memory of his presence is a hurt to me." He paused, then continued. "I would give a great deal to find him again. I would travel a long distance to see him again. I know not merely that I miss him but now he is gone I know I need him." He tapped the skull. "Tonight my lady reminds me, not of the brief sweetness of life, not of the sudden excitement of the immediate moment but of the long dull emptiness of death."

Again Matt was beyond me so I said nothing. There was a profound silence, especially profound in the dark café with Matt mistily staring at the polished skull in the light of the single table lamp.

After a while, Matt held up the book he had been reading. "This was his breviary," he said.

"Maybe he'll come back for that," I said. "It looks like quite a book."

"It was his only possession, really," Matt went on. "Note how worn the pages are. His life was a strange life for a priest but you can see he did not fail to recite the Divine Office. He must have loved this book but I am sure he will not return for it. No. His secret is revealed, or, rather I should say, a part of it is revealed and his simplicity would never permit him the embarrassment of facing our questions. No. He is gone."

Matt thumbed the pages of the breviary. A small card, such as is used for a place marker, fell out of the pages. He picked up the card and read a quotation on it.

"This is good," he said. "Listen. 'Great is the power and courage of love, for God is its prisoner. St. John of the Cross.'" He looked over at me. "All right, isn't it? 'Great is the power and courage of love, for God is its prisoner.' Somehow I can imagine Dennis going around with God as his prisoner."

As Matt spoke, I noticed printing on the back of the card. I called Matt's attention to it. He turned the card.

His face immediately showed excitement. "I think we have something. I know we have something." He hastily passed the card over to me. "Read that. It's a memento card. It gives the story. Read it."

I read, "Dennis Browne, First Solemn High Mass, St. Aidan's Church, Ipswich, New York."

"There's the story!" Matt exclaimed.

"It's only the beginning of the story," I said. "Look there at the small print. It's dated ten years ago."

"Yes, it is only the beginning of the story but it's enough," Matt agreed, his excitement growing. "It's the starting point of the quest."

That night Matt's idea of a quest I considered an inspiration of the mood of the evening that would pass as the evening passed. But I underestimated his devotion to Dennis.

The next night when I returned to Matt's place I found the *Closed for Alterations* sign on the door of the café as before. But this time the café was completely dark and the door was locked. Matt was not there.

He had already, it turned out, gone on his quest, as he in his rather literary fashion had put it.

7

WEEKS, MONTHS went by. Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's Day highlighted the passing of time. And I heard not a word from Matt.

Then late one early February evening, a Saturday, he telephoned the office. Would I come out to his place that night? There was excitement in his voice but he gave no hint of what he had in his mind.

I drove out the Coast Highway in a heavy rain. The *Closed for Alterations* sign was still on the door. The café was dark. But the door was open and I went on in.

The café was dusty and needed airing but otherwise it was as I had last seen it months before.

Matt sat in his usual booth under the single table lamp with the skull before him, looking exactly as I had seen him last. There was only one change, a major change it eventually turned out to be. Beside Matt, near the window, sat a young woman I had not seen before.

So striking was the woman I could not keep from staring at her. Her hair, flaxen and bountiful, fell to her shoulders, defining a strangely pale, high-cheekboned face, set with dark, lazy violet eyes and a large, sensuous mouth. Her cheeks looked as if she were ever so slightly sucking them in and gave her face the appearance of unusual sensitivity. Her body was slender and yet voluptuous. She was an engaging, slightly disturbing combination of commonness and distinction.

Matt enjoyed the impression he could see she made on me.

"Meet Miss Wren," he said, introducing us.

I joined them, sitting across from them in the booth.

"I am going to tell you the story of my quest," he announced grandly, "the story of our friend Dennis. I have been to many towns and cities. I've talked to many people. I do not have the whole story as yet but I have much of it. The end I hope we will soon find out."

So Matt began.

8

NO ONE enjoyed Matt's manner of talking—his extravagance with words, his fondness for his sometimes hazily mystical conceits, his grandiloquent apostrophes and the rest of it—more than I, but I'm afraid if I put down Dennis' story exactly as Matt told it, it might come out a little too discursive, too vagrant with irrelevancies and, in a word, too protracted for any one-volume work. I shall therefore play my part as a rewrite man and tell Dennis' story as directly and succinctly as I can. Matt's comments will be interpolated here and there when they appear particularly pertinent. If I should appear to improvise on occasions, that is Matt's doing, not mine.

Dennis was born Dennis Browne in a small city in upstate New York, a city which, for the purposes of this narrative, I have called Ipswich. He was an only son. His father owned and operated a hardware store in the heart of town and was reasonably prosperous. Mr. Browne had dreamed of a large family but his wife had other ideas. Her one experience with childbearing was all she wanted. Mr. Browne, tolerant, patient, abided by her wishes.

Dennis' father was a serene, simple man, a Catholic and a devout one. His mother was also a Catholic but could hardly be described as devout. She fancied herself a woman of great allure (there was no question she did have considerable physical charm), much too bewitching for her husband and his small city. The shops, the dressmaker, the beauty parlor and the theater, motion picture and legitimate, were the chief claimants on her time.

Dennis deeply loved his father and mother and when he grew into his teens and discovered his mother's inclinations and his father's unhappiness over them, he too became unhappy, as unhappy as a sensitive, reflective boy can be. He humored his mother in all her flippancies and small indulgences and strove to show her constant affection and tried, as subtly as he could, to suggest to her how deeply she was hurting his father. But the boy was unable to influence her.

Secretly she had, as it turned out, a highly romantic notion about her destiny and it did not include the small city of Ipswich and the devout and plain father and son.

When Dennis was in his last year in high school, his mother had an affair with the leading man in a musical comedy road show playing in the city and went off with him. It was, naturally, a shock and a scandal, especially with the help of the local newspapers. Dennis and his father walked the darkness of heartbreak and helplessness. Presently, the mother instituted divorce proceedings on the grounds of cruelty and incompatibility. She declared no special interest in Dennis. Dennis' father did not contest the divorce.

These months brought the father and son more closely together. By an unspoken pact, no mention of the mother was made again. The father never did recover from his wife's perfidy and two years later, when Dennis was a sophomore at Georgetown in Washington, he died in his sleep. Everybody who knew him believed he died of heartbreak.

Dennis tried to reach his mother in New York City, where her husband was a star in a new musical, to tell her of his father's death. He reached the actor but not his mother. She had already divorced him and married a Chilean millionaire playboy. It was a lonely youth who saw his father laid to rest.

Dennis had never considered he had any special calling to the priesthood. But in those days after his father's death he suffered particularly from a sense of the brevity and futility of life in general and of the guilt of his mother in particular. He began to meditate the becoming a priest as an act or, perhaps, as a life of reparation for her.

So the idea of a vocation began. It grew in intensity. Then, a year after his father's death, his pastor and confessor recommended he enter

the diocesan seminary. If the young Dennis had any doubts as to the validity of his vocation, which he did have, they soon vanished after his enrollment at the seminary.

He was well remembered at the seminary. He showed some talent for letters but he was best remembered for his extraordinary humility. It is told of him, for example, how the prefect of discipline once hearing the crash of fallen crockery in the kitchen hurried in to find Dennis picking up the pieces of a broken platter and murmuring contritely, over and over again, "Forgive me, Lord Jesus, I broke Your dish. Forgive me, Lord Jesus, I broke Your dish." He was completely unaware of the prefect's entrance. It was a picture of childlike humility as the prefect described it.

In the seminary library under a reproduction of Rembrandt's etching, *The Crucifixion*, was a framed typewritten poem Dennis had written. It is given here not so much as a revelation of his talent for letters as another evidence of his humility.

GOOD FRIDAY

Christ is nailed to the two-branched tree,
His blood runs fast, His blood runs free.

Where have all fled?
Where are the sick His love made well?
Where are the lost He kept from Hell?
Where are the living He raised from the dead?
Lazarus, His friend, where is he?
Where is the son of the widow of Maim?
Where is she?
Where are the blind He made to see?
What of His lepers, His sick, His lame,
His deaf, His dumb, His sore-distressed,
His poor, His lambs, His devil-possessed?
Where are all He kept from Hell?
Where are all His love made well?
Where are all on this lonely day?
Where are they?

Christ is nailed to the two-branched tree,
His blood runs fast, His blood runs free.
Where am I?
What of me?

After his ordination, Dennis was assigned to a parish in a large city. His pastor, a monsignor, a stern extrovert of the old school, looked on Dennis with a critical eye. He did not feel in any way honored by the appointment of Dennis. He considered him much too naïve and, generally, ineffectual.

Dennis was, for example, hardly what could be called a forceful preacher. He was shy in the pulpit. He talked rather than preached. His themes were often (too often, the pastor thought) from St. John of the Cross, the Spanish Carmelite, to whom he had a great devotion. We have already seen one quotation from the great mystic, the one on the memento of his first Solemn High Mass, "Great is the power and courage of love, for God is its prisoner." That this was one of his guiding thoughts in the pulpit can be surmised from the honor he gave it.

Another favorite theme of his talks, also from St. John of the Cross, was in the quotation, "An instant of pure love is more precious in the eyes of God and the soul, and more profitable to the Church, than all good works together though it may seem as if nothing were done."

It is a beautiful thought, and true, I'm sure, but it can be understood how a busy, unmystical pastor of a city church striving for lay cooperation and contributions would look on this declaration that pure love is more precious and profitable than all good works put together.

There were some understanding souls among the parishioners who liked Dennis, strange and other-worldly though he must have seemed to them, but generally the rough, tough parishioners agreed with their pastor and considered him high-flown and ineffectual. There were also the few, as there always are, who were concerned for him because he was handsome and could therefore come to no good end.

His stay in the parish would at best have not been long but it happened it was considerably shortened by the events that are about to be related, events that proved to be determining factors in Dennis' future.

9

IT WAS A warm, placid July late afternoon. Father Dennis was in his room reading his favorite saint's meditation on his poem *The Living Flame of Love,* and was deep in the spiritual romance of the Bride and her Beloved. Mrs. Guinness, the housekeeper, knocked on the room door. The first knock Father Dennis did not hear. Nor the second. But the third was a thumping that brought him abruptly out of his mystical adventure.

Mrs. Guinness eyed the curate coolly. She had little use for curates but for this curate she had hardly use at all.

"Sorry to wake you up, Father," she said, nodding her head sharply as she spoke, a habit of hers when she wished to give significance to words that had no apparent significance otherwise.

"I was reading," Father Dennis meekly explained.

"If you don't mind my saying so, Father, I think you ought to get out and around more. Get to know the parish and the parishioners," she advised with advice that turned out to be anything but wise. "Mrs. Dutton is downstairs in the parlor with Mrs. Galvin. Mrs. Galvin is the wife of Mr. Galvin, the roofer, who plays golf with Monsignor. They came to see Monsignor but he is out and I thought it might be a good thing for you if you discussed their problem with them."

"Thank you, Mrs. Guinness," Father Dennis said. "I guess I haven't been as concerned with parish life as I should be."

"They're in a high dudgeon about some rascality." There was a trace of satisfaction in her voice. "They're a pair of dragoons, I might as well tell you."

"Good," Father Dennis said with his little smile. "I'm sometimes afraid the fine virtue of indignation has been lost."

Just what Mrs. Guinness meant by Mrs. Galvin and Mrs. Dutton being dragoons is not clearly known unless somehow she was thinking of dragons, but a pair of amazons they certainly were, huge, red-necked and excitable almost to being apoplectic.

They were truly in a high dudgeon. It seems some ladies of the evening had taken a house in Mrs. Galvin's and Mrs. Dutton's neighborhood, a slightly shabby but still proud neighborhood of ancient red brick and brownstone fronts.

The ladies had a stream of callers from early evening until late at night.

"But aren't they the crafty ones!" Mrs. Galvin exclaimed. "They're as quiet as mice. We can't get no complaint against them for disturbing the peace!"

"At noon they walk around the streets bareheaded in the sunshine takin' their exercise as free and easy as if they were honest women," Mrs. Dutton complained.

"They're brazen, that's what they are!" Mrs. Galvin's face as well as her neck was red. "Those floozies!"

Mrs. Galvin and Mrs. Dutton had complained to the police.

"And the sergeant at the desk was a Catholic too," Mrs. Galvin declared indignantly, "Sergeant Matthews, a married man with a family and a member of the Holy Name! And he never lifted as much as a little

finger. I'll bet somebody's payin' him off. He said he knew about the girls but they didn't do no soliciting so his hands were tied. It was a job for the vice squad. He reported it, he said."

"The vice squad indeed!" Mrs. Dutton snorted. "The Jezebels are too slick for those young weasels in their Sunday suits. They laugh at them!"

Father Dennis listened without comment to the two parishioners. It was a problem indeed.

"It's a disgrace to the parish and to all decent women," Mrs. Galvin orated. "Why, do you know yesterday noon the floozies out walking stopped in front of my house and talked to my little girl who was playing on the steps. 'Hi, honey,' they said," Mrs. Galvin gave an imitation of the voices making them what she considered musical and therefore presumably sinful. " 'How you, sweetie?' 'Where did you get those golden curls?' 'You're a cutie, do you know that?' The gall of them, talking to my sweet little baby! I let them have it from the window. I'm a lady but I called them 'hores, that's what I called them! And that's all right, isn't it, Father? That's what they are! And did they run? They did not! They stood there and laughed at me and then sauntered off as easy as you please. What do you think of that, Father?"

"Let us pray for them," Father Dennis said.

That suggestion really raised the hair on the good women's heads. They hadn't come there asking for prayers, they had come because they wanted action, they announced. They wanted Father Dennis to call up the chief of police that very minute and give him a piece of his mind. They wanted immediate action. They wanted results.

Father Dennis was in difficulty. He had no inclination whatsoever for calling up the chief of police and giving him a piece of his mind. He was incapable of giving anyone a piece of his mind. Further, much as he was in favor of what he had called "the fine virtue of indignation," he had the feeling the two good women had gone more than a little beyond bounds on that noble emotion.

"Maybe if someone talked to the poor girls," he suggested mildly, "maybe they might give up their life. Maybe Monsignor might find jobs for them."

Mrs. Galvin and Mrs. Dutton stared at each other in disbelief. They had not expected much from the curate in the first place. But this was sheer insanity. Talk to the poor girls! Indeed!

"Father," Mrs. Galvin said with a restraint that nearly burst her wide open, "you do not understand. You are too young. These are wicked women who should be put in jail."

"And kept there!" Mrs. Dutton added.

"They are a threat to morality and the sanctity of marriage," Mrs. Galvin continued as if speaking from memory.

"And to the Christian home," Mrs. Dutton appended.

"What time does Monsignor get back?" Mrs. Galvin asked abruptly.

"About six."

"We'll be back," Mrs. Galvin declared. "We'll be back at six."

Father Dennis sat weakly down on a black horsehair sofa in the parlor. He felt he should do something. Mrs. Galvin and Mrs. Dutton had, for all their emotion, one point in their favor. The conduct of the girls was sinful and not to be condoned. But what to do?

What would St. John of the Cross have done?

He must do something, Father Dennis kept telling himself. Mrs. Guinness was right. He should get out into the parish. He should get to know the parishioners and their problems.

Suddenly he had an inspiration. The day before, July 22, had been the feast day of Mary Magdalen and now he vividly remembered the Gospel of the day. He remembered Christ talking to the sinful Magdalene. He remembered and a resolution began to take form. He remembered and slowly he got to his feet.

He knew now what he should do.

10

Father Dennis pulled the doorbell at the door of the ancient brownstone front.

After a moment, the door was opened the few inches a restraining chain would permit. Ada, an older girl who was a madam of sorts, peered out. She was in a pink robe and her hair was in curlers.

She gasped in astonishment as she saw the tall, bareheaded young priest standing outside.

"Just a minute, please," she managed to mumble and closed the door.

At that moment, it so happened, Mr. Sheridan, an undertaker and an usher, was approaching his house across the street. Mr. Sheridan, as a leading parishioner, was more than a little on the rigorist side. Naturally he was astounded to see the young curate standing humbly waiting for admittance to the house of pleasure which, of course, Mr. Sheridan knew it to be.

It must be said of Mr. Sheridan, if he viewed this scene with suspicion, he had what he considered good reason for doing so. Father Dennis

was generally suspect with him. Once he had given a talk from the pulpit urging the use in funerals of a plain wooden box such as is the custom of the Carmelites rather than the plush and expensive caskets in vogue, and that idea, it is understandable, could hardly have stirred enthusiasm in an undertaker. Similarly the young curate was suspect with all the florists in the parish. On several occasions he had spoken of what he considered the folly and futility of spending money on flowers for a corpse.

Mr. Sheridan hurried up his stairs and into his house and called loudly for his wife. She came quickly. They both rushed to the front parlor window to watch the curate as he still stood in the late afternoon sunlight outside the disreputable door.

Mrs. Sheridan, quite understandably, shared her husband's unfavorable opinion of the young priest. She also was one of the parishioners who was sure the curate was too alluring to the young women of the parish ever to come to any good end.

Meanwhile, Ada and the four other girls in the house held a quick, nervous conference. Two of the girls were Catholics and they urged admittance of the young priest. He didn't know what the house was and had probably come to sell them tickets to a raffle or a picnic. It would be bad luck sure if they turned him away.

Ada returned to the door. Again she opened the door only the few inches the chain would allow.

"We'll take some tickets, Father," she said, "whatever it's for.

"There are no tickets," Father Dennis said. "I just wanted to come in for a visit if you don't mind."

Ada was stunned but she remembered what the two Catholic girls had said about bad luck.

Mr. and Mrs. Sheridan, in the parlor window across the street, watched stony-eyed as Ada, in her curlers and pink robe, opened the door wide and admitted the curate.

Ada led the way into the parlor off the hall just inside of the entrance door. It was a large, drear room with heavy maroon draperies blacking out the afternoon light. Ada drew the draperies ever so slightly but enough to reveal a scuffed dirty carpet, an ancient, stained, marble mantelpiece with artificial daisies in a vase on it, and a set of overstuffed, frayed, faded green furniture.

Father Dennis looked around the room, saw it was empty.

"There are other girls, aren't there, Miss?"

Ada was alarmed. Evidently he knew the truth. She did not know what to say and so said nothing.

Father Dennis looked at her with eyes that hardly saw her, with eyes

that certainly did not notice her large coarse, world-worn face, her red-dyed hair and her worn, frilly-laced pink robe. "I just wanted to have a little talk with everybody," he said.

Now Ada could see his young innocence and sense his harmlessness. She indicated a chair. "It'll be a minute or so, Father."

Ada hurried out into the hall and up the stairs that led to the upper floor. Father Dennis sat in the indicated chair and fixed his gaze on the artificial daisies. He had a feeling of satisfaction. The first, vast step had been taken. He was at last truly about His Father's business.

Matt Easter, telling the story in his booth in the café that night, made a point here. "I sometimes think," he said, "that God is more fond of His sinners than His saints, and the same in a certain fashion could be said of Dennis."

It was some time and the shadows were long outside before the girls made their appearance. The five came slowly down the staircase and filed into the parlor. Now they were all in their evening best—their display clothes, so to speak—satin gowns of different colors and in very high heels. Out of deference to the priest they wore very little make-up. All were nervous and one girl, Cara, the only young and attractive girl in the five was frightened.

Father Dennis got to his feet as they entered. Ada was slightly over medium size and the others were under and the young priest in his tallness seemed tall indeed. He bowed to the girls and asked them to be seated.

Then, his head slightly back, his little smile on his face and his eyes on infinity, as Matt put it, he began to talk.

"Do you know what he talked about?" Matt asked. "So far as I was able to gather, he spoke to those uneasy and puzzled women of Christ and His love of them. He spoke of Him, in one phrase that was remembered, as a rich but hungry beggar knocking at their hearts.

"It was pretty strange and heavy stuff for them and, you may be sure, they, like Gloria, did not understand much of what he said. But they did sense they were beholding an extraordinary phenomenon. They may not have been persuaded that some god loved them but they knew this man before them loved them.

"They sat humble and in tears. The doorbell and the telephone rang quite often as evening came on but nobody was interested in answering. Dusk filled the room and still he talked. And one girl, Cara, she who

was young and pretty, declares there was a strange light in his eyes as he talked, a light that grew as the darkness deepened.

"I must say Cara was not necessarily a good witness. Transported, she had fallen in love with the young priest. Like Gloria, she had fallen in love with his innocence."

It was dark and the street lights were on when Father Dennis left the house.

11

Mr. and Mrs. Sheridan were already at the rectory when Mrs. Galvin and Mrs. Dutton arrived.

Mrs. Sheridan lost no time in telling the two parish stalwarts of the shocking sight they had seen.

Mrs. Galvin was the first to comment. "He slipped in to have a little chat with them and perhaps a spot of tea," she said with sarcasm that chilled the little parlor. "He mentioned some insanity of the kind when we talked with him here today."

"Maybe he and the little dears said their beads together." Mrs. Dutton was equally bitter.

"It's a scandal," Mr. Sheridan said ominously. "It'll do our parish no good I'm telling you, no good at all."

"It's no place for a priest to visit, a house like that," Mrs. Sheridan said sadly. "We'll look like fools to our Protestant neighbors."

"We'll have to hang our heads in shame," Mrs. Dutton said.

Mrs. Galvin summed it up. "The curate, he's more of a problem than the 'hores."

The monsignor entered.

He listened to his indignant parishioners tell their tale out, and tell it out they did with many an embellishment.

When the parishioners had finished, he said curtly, "Father Dennis probably went to the house to make a sick call."

"That he didn't, if you don't mind my saying so, Monsignor," Mrs. Sheridan spoke up. "They must have kept him waiting outside for ten minutes. They wouldn't have done that if they had sent for him, would they?"

The monsignor resented this criticism of a priest, even his curate, by parishioners.

"Suppose, my dear people," he said with the severity permitted a

pastor and a monsignor, "suppose you leave Father Dennis and the problems of the rectory to me. Such parish problems as the house of prostitution are not uncommon in a city parish and there is a way of handling them, I promise you. Those women have illegally and under false pretenses rented an honorable house and they will shortly be evicted."

The housekeeper, Mrs. Guinness, appeared at the parlor door to announce dinner and that closed the meeting. The parishioners filed humbly out, more impressed than ever by the authority of their pastor, the monsignor.

Once the housekeeper and the pastor were alone together he said, "Ask Father Dennis to come here, will you?"

"There's been no sign of him, Monsignor, since he went out this afternoon," Mrs. Guinness answered.

"He's not home yet?" The monsignor lost his austere calm. "Have you heard from him?"

"No sign of him at all, Monsignor." Mrs. Guinness imagined the agitation of the monsignor was due to the curate's being late for dinner. It was an iron rule with him: a curate was never to be late for dinner. The monsignor had got rid of curates who had broken the rule.

The monsignor's face colored slowly with wrath. "This is a fine kettle of fish," he said half aloud, "a fine kettle of fish." Then he sharply recovered. "Serve dinner, Mrs. Guinness. If Father Dennis comes, you will serve him only after I have left the table."

"Yes, Monsignor." Mrs. Guinness, sensing that something more than appeared was afoot, turned quickly and hurried toward the kitchen.

The monsignor was sipping his coffee when Father Dennis came in.

"Good evening, Monsignor," he lightly greeted the pastor.

The monsignor eyed him coldly, did not return the greeting.

Father Dennis said grace and sat down at the end of the table. His face was slightly flushed, his eyes bright.

"You seem exhilarated over something, Father," the monsignor said coldly.

"I am, Monsignor. I am very happy," Father Dennis said ebulliently. "I feel I've done a good afternoon's work."

"You visited that house of ill fame on Vernon Street or so the neighbors inform me." The monsignor's voice was metallic. "Is that the good work?"

The curate in his high spirits did not notice his pastor's antipathy. He nodded enthusiastically. "I thought it was about time I got out and around the parish."

The monsignor studied him, seeking to assay the value of this declaration. "Did you ask those—those women to get out of there?"

"I didn't, Monsignor. I never thought of asking them to leave their home."

"Why on earth did you go there then?"

"I thought perhaps if I gave them a little talk, a little conference, sort of, it might help them."

"You were there quite a while for a little talk. You are late for dinner, I suppose you know that."

"I'm sorry, Monsignor. I'm afraid I don't have much sense of time."

"Lack of sense is never acceptable to me as an excuse." The monsignor paused for a moment to put his emotions in order. Then he said as quietly as he could, "You're aware, I'm sure, you could give great scandal, a young priest like you going into a house like that? I hope you have made up your mind not to do so again. I might as well tell you some parishioners have already been here to protest your behavior."

Father Dennis' exhilaration left him. "It never occurred to me I might give scandal. No, Monsignor. I looked on those girls as so many children, so many Magdalens to be cherished. It has often seemed to me I have a special devotion to the Magdalens."

The monsignor paused again. "What did you talk about, may I ask?"

Father Dennis' exhilaration began to return. "I talked on the extravagance, the prodigality, the abandon of God's love. It is a talk I gave the nuns in the convent two weeks ago."

The monsignor's incredulity finally broke the fine discipline of his face. "A talk you gave the nuns?"

"Yes, Monsignor." The curate's enthusiasm was completely renewed. "It's from a beautiful thought of St. John of the Cross. It goes like this—"

But Father Dennis did not get to the quotation. The monsignor got abruptly to his feet, interrupting him. He said grace as if he were saying a prayer over a corpse, turned sharply and left the dining room.

Father Dennis, finally disconcerted by the monsignor's pointedly abrupt departure, got slowly to his feet.

Mrs. Guinness entered with a cup of soup.

Father Dennis shook his head. "Thank you, Mrs. Guinness, but I don't think I'll have any dinner if you don't mind."

"No dinner at all?"

"No thank you. I'm not hungry."

Mrs. Guinness, for all her disdain for curates, and for this curate especially, was still a woman who believed young men should eat. "We have roast lamb tonight, Father. It is very good."

"No, nothing, thank you." Then, meditatively he said, "Monsignor seems to be angry at me about something. I think he thinks I gave scandal this afternoon. I could have. I could very well have. I'm afraid I do not have good judgment."

Mrs. Guinness for the first time since she had known the curate was sympathetic. "You were late for dinner, Father," she said. "But I'm sure you couldn't help it."

"It's more than that, I'm afraid, Mrs. Guinness," the curate said quietly.

Mrs. Guinness nodded. "Yes, it could be, though there are few greater sins for Monsignor than being late for dinner. He did, just now as he was going through the house, ask me to pray for you."

Father Dennis turned quickly, earnestly to the housekeeper. "Oh, please pray for me, Mrs. Guinness! Please pray deeply for me! I try hard but I'm such a poor priest, such a poor priest!"

Mrs. Guinness was startled by the curate's sudden emotion. She backed toward the pantry door.

"I'll get you a glass of milk anyway," she said, desperately in need of an excuse to go.

She turned and hurried from the room.

12

THE MONSIGNOR'S next few days were troubled days. He had to make a decision. The monsignor had his own rigid standards, perhaps too rigid, but he lived by them himself and he sought to be just.

The curate problem with Father Dennis was unlike any curate problem he had had heretofore. Father Dennis was deeply religious, there was no question about that. He did not smoke or take a cocktail or even go in for pastimes as innocent as handball. Such spare time as he did not spend in his room in meditation, he spent in the confessional or before the altar.

What the monsignor had to decide was whether his curate was merely young and immature and thus capable of being brought to reason by careful supervision and the passing of time or whether he was irremediably unbalanced and irresponsible.

Father Dennis presently helped the pastor to come to a decision.

It was a drowsy afternoon three days after Father Dennis' visit to the girls' house. The pastor was out at the barber shop. Father Dennis, now

determined to be of practical use, was in the office working, not too successfully, at bringing the parish records up to date.

The telephone rang. Father Dennis, at the desk, answered it. It was a young woman's voice. She wanted to talk to the young priest.

When Father Dennis answered that he was the young priest, the young woman's voice grew vibrant. She was Cara, she said, a girl at the house he visited the other day. Would he come to visit her?

Father Dennis was embarrassed. He could not visit her, he said. He must have given her a wrong impression when he was at the house.

The girl's voice was suddenly intense. She had to see him. She wanted to become a Catholic.

Father Dennis was immediately relieved. He was also grateful. His visit had not been a blunder.

He was very pleased, he told the girl. She had made a decision that would bring great happiness to her life. But it would be best that she come to the rectory. They could talk more leisurely there.

The girl said she could not come to the rectory. She would be embarrassed.

Father Dennis said he could not go to the house. His visit the other day had had unhappy consequences.

The girl, her voice growing in emotion, pleaded with the young priest. He had to come to see her. She would never go to the rectory. She would be ashamed.

Now it was Father Dennis who pleaded. Shame, he said, was a small price to pay for her soul. If she came in the evening nobody would see her.

But the girl refused. It was impossible. Finally, reluctantly she ended the conversation.

Father Dennis was profoundly disturbed. He felt a deep obligation toward this girl. His visit to the house, his talk, had borne fruit and with all his heart he wanted it harvested.

He went across the cement walk to the church. Inside he knelt before the altar of the Virgin and pleaded for guidance.

Matt paused in his narration. He had made coffee and he poured fresh cups for himself and me.

The first pale gray light of daybreak was misting the dark gloom of the café and troubling the placid black ocean beyond the window. The table lamp was making a sickly protest against the coming of day. The skull on the table shone whitely as if with some subtle life of its own.

The girl was slumped back in the corner of the booth peacefully asleep, her flaxen hair looking silver in the gray shadows.

"Father Dennis, on his knees before Our Lady's altar," Matt went on, the coffee cup in his hand, "was facing the crisis of his life. This girl's soul and its salvation were now, he felt, I'm sure, his sole responsibility. The blame for her damnation, if she were damned, would be laid directly to him.

"On the other hand, his going to the house again would be against the pastor's wishes if not his orders. He might give scandal. He had before . . ."

13

Cara, in a pale green cotton dress, opened the door. Her deep violet eyes grew bright with surprise and delight as she discovered the young priest standing there. She quickly loosened the door chain and let him in.

She looked quite pretty in an earthy way, with her flaxen hair falling to her shoulders framing her pale, high-cheekboned, full-lipped face. But if she thought Father Dennis saw her in her attractiveness, as she most probably did, she was wrong.

As Matt put it, "Father Dennis rarely saw anyone—that is, as others see people. As a metaphysician might put it, he saw only their essence. It might be said he saw their souls."

Cara led Father Dennis into the shabby parlor. She noticed he glanced up the staircase as he went through the hall.

"I'm alone in the house," she said. "The other girls have moved away."

"It is good the girls have moved away," Father Dennis said.

"I don't know how good it is," Cara commented. "They simply wanted to get out of the parish. They didn't want to hurt your feelings."

"They are daily in my prayers. I have great hope for them," Father Dennis said. "They are really good girls. Are you moving away?"

"I stayed to be near you, Father."

He noticed the emotion in her voice. He was disturbed.

"I think you should get a room for yourself in some good home," he said. "Maybe I can help you get a job."

"Could you come to see me if I had a room in some good home?"

"That all depends on the circumstances," he said gently. "I shouldn't be alone in this house with you now, my child."

"I wanted to see you again," she said, and now her lips quivered slightly with her emotion.

Father Dennis grew more disturbed. He took a paper-bound catechism out of the side pocket of his coat.

"This is a catechism," he said, "a little book that gives the truths of our Holy Faith. Suppose we sit down and I'll go over the first chapter." They sat down, the girl on the sofa, the young priest on a nearby chair. "I want you to study this and learn the answers. You can come to the rectory once a week and we'll talk over each lesson. I should tell you there is a great deal more to Mother Church than is in the catechism."

Her dark eyes were fixed on his face. "Can we be alone if I go to the rectory?"

"I'll answer the door and nobody will see you, if that's what you mean." He opened the paper-bound book. "Suppose we run over a question or two just to get the idea." He read from the book, " 'Who made you?' That is the first question and the answer is, 'God made me and lives in me.' Suppose I ask you then, 'Who made you?' and you answer, 'God made me and lives in me.' Now, 'Who made you?' "

Her voice was low, vibrant. " 'God made me and lives in me.' "

"Very good."

"Father?"

"Yes, my child."

"Do priests ever marry?"

"Not in the Latin Rite. Why do you ask, my child?"

"I was just thinking."

"Suppose we go on to the second question, 'Who is God?' The answer is, 'God is our Father in Heaven.' See if you can repeat that then. 'Who is God?' "

" 'God is our Father in Heaven.' "

"Very good. Very good."

She moved along the sofa to be nearer to him. "Isn't it unnatural for a man not to have a woman, Father?"

He looked at her in surprise. "You're not interested in this lesson are you, my child?"

"No, I'm not, Father." She moved slightly closer.

He closed the book. "I must warn you—what is your name?"

"Cara."

"I must warn you, Cara, that it is not easy to become a Catholic." He got slowly to his feet. "You must want to with all your heart and all your soul. You must pray, pray."

Suddenly she slipped from the sofa to her knees on the floor and flung her arms around his knees, her flaxen hair tumbling over his feet. "I just wanted to see you again." Now she was sobbing. "I never met any-

one like you. I never knew there was anyone like you in the world. I just had to see you again."

Father Dennis pulled back and broke her embrace. "My child, my poor child, you are starved for the love of God."

She, still on her knees, lifted her face to him. Tears shone in her dark eyes. "I love you, Father."

"Hush. Hush, Cara. I was not born for a woman's love." There was a great kindness on his face as he talked. "You love genuinely, Cara. You love deeply. Many sins are forgiven you because you have loved so much. I shall give you my blessing."

He made the sign of the cross over her while she sobbed on her knees, and gave her his blessing.

He then leaned down and taking her arm raised her to her feet. "I must go now, my dear."

He put the catechism down on the table and turned to leave. "Pray, pray hard, my child," he said. "Mother Church is your home, the home for all who love much and have lost their way."

He went out into the hall and to the front door. She opened the door, her eyes still filmed with tears.

"I shall remember you each morning at Mass," he said as he went down the stairs. "Good-bye, my child. God loves you dearly."

She stood in the open door and sadly watched him go.

Across the street, Mrs. Sheridan had come into her parlor to wash the windows, waiting, as was her custom, till the afternoon when the sun was gone from them and shone on the other side of the street. She looked out and saw the curate going down the stairs and the flaxen-haired harlot standing in the open doorway with tears down her face.

It is understandable that Mrs. Sheridan dropped her wash bucket to the floor.

Matt sipped his coffee. The dawn beyond the window was widening across the sky and splashing the ocean with flame.

"You wonder perhaps how I know so well what went on in that house that day?" He turned to the sleeping, flaxen-haired girl beside him. "This is Cara. I shall tell you her story later."

His announcement was no great surprise to me. I had already had a good idea our flaxen-haired companion was Cara.

14

Father Dennis sat in the reception hall of the bishop's residence, a dark, musty room slightly overdone with religious pictures. On a carved wood table was a stack of religious magazines.

Father Dennis went through the motions of looking through the magazines.

A young, husky, blond monsignor, the bishop's secretary, came into the hall from the living room. He seemed austere and, to the troubled Father Dennis, a little terrifying.

"His Excellency is free now," he said. "Please."

From his look Father Dennis knew the secretary considered him of more than ordinary interest. Father Dennis followed him into the drawing room.

The secretary withdrew, closing the door behind him.

The drawing room was ornate, heavy with a dark red oval rug and massive, dark red upholstered furniture. The bishop, in a black cassock with narrow purplish-red piping, sat at a mahogany table in a tall, throne-like chair. On the wall a short distance behind him hung a Raphael-school madonna in a wide gold frame.

The bishop was of medium size, perhaps five feet ten or so, but in the tall chair he looked quite small. His hair was white, his face thin, ascetical.

Father Dennis went to him, knelt on one knee and kissed his ring.

There was silence. The bishop tapped the table softly with long pale fingers.

"You know why you are here, Father?" the bishop finally broke the silence.

Father Dennis bowed his head humbly. "Yes, Your Excellency."

"Sit down, won't you? Do you feel you have been maligned? Is there any thing you would like to say in your defense? Or in explanation perhaps?"

"No, Your Excellency," Father Dennis replied quietly as he sat in a chair by the table. "It is all true. I have made a fool of myself."

The bishop's lips tightened for an instant. "I'm afraid you have done more than that, Father." He paused, then went on. "I am going to be very brief with you and very much to the point.

"There is a virtue called prudence which is a great virtue and an especially great virtue in a priest. It is the first of the cardinal virtues, as you know. It is circumspect and it is wise. It directs the other virtues.

Indeed it might be said the other virtues depend on it. You are aware of this, of course?"

"Yes, Your Excellency."

"I know you can say the virtue of prudence has seemingly been often disregarded by the saints. The history of almost any saint will reveal extravagance in action, extremity in self-mortification, for example. It was certainly foolhardy for little St. Francis to make his hazardous trip through a land of hostile infidels to see the sultan. The ecstasy of the Little Flower when she saw the coughed-up blood that meant her early death can hardly be interpreted in terms of the golden mean as we know it. But they did not give scandal. And they were saints. Most of us, alas, are not saints."

There was sadness in Father Dennis' voice as he said, "I know that too well, Your Excellency."

"But to get back to your case, Father," the bishop resumed, apparently unaware of any emotion on Father Dennis' part. "I'm afraid in your recent actions you have sinned seriously against prudence, how seriously you alone can know.

"Charity toward those fallen women could, prudently practiced, have been the greatest of virtues. Imprudently practiced as it was, it may have been a source of scandal and serious sin, and was, I'm afraid, foolhardiness itself. Your being alone in that house with that woman was particularly foolhardy."

"Yes, Your Excellency," Father Dennis said in great humility. "I am sorry. I am sorry from the bottom of my heart."

The bishop nodded slowly. "Well and good. But I must point out to you that your contrition is not the complete answer. I don't know that there is any complete answer. But I do know that the priesthood is a corps with a proud record of prudent conduct through many, many centuries. Their prudence has often demanded the virtues of the field of battle: bravery and loyalty and sacrifice.

"Right reason applied to practice is not always easily come by. The record of the priesthood is a golden record of brave discretion, of dauntless prudence. There is no other corps, military or otherwise, can boast of so glorious an achievement through so many centuries."

The bishop paused, hesitated as if he did not want to say what he was going to say. "I have a special point to make, Father. Your actions may have been ignorance on your part. They may have been plain stupidity. I am sure they were not intentional. But nonetheless, you, I have to say, have failed the corps.

"In a small way, in this parish in this diocese, you have besmirched

its golden record. I say this in all charity, Father, but it is necessary I say it."

Father Dennis' head was bowed and his voice almost inaudible as he said, "I'm sorry, Your Excellency. I shall be sorry for the rest of my life."

"Well and good." The bishop nodded. "I have said about what I wanted to say. Do you have a home you can go to?"

"No, Your Excellency." Father Dennis' head remained bowed.

"It is a pity. You see, Father, you are quite a serious problem." He glanced at a typescript on the table before him. "There is considerable question as to your fitness for parish work of any sort. This has not directly to do with the particular foolhardiness we were just discussing. Your approach to even the most ordinary problem seems unrealistic. You have been described as irresponsible and from the record it appears as if the description is just.

"It will take me some time to decide just what disposition is to be made of you. Do you have any money?"

"I don't know, Your Excellency." Father Dennis felt lamely in his pockets. "Yes, I have some."

"Good. Suppose then you go away for a few days and I'll see what can be done. Think things over. Think especially of the virtue of prudence. And pray. Pray, Father. Pray for guidance. Perhaps if you could go to the Trappist monastery in Kentucky and spend the time there you might find the proper illumination. I shall pray too. Have you any questions?"

Father Dennis got to his feet. "May I have your blessing, please?"

Father Dennis knelt by the bishop's chair. The bishop rose and gave the young priest his blessing.

"Thank you, Your Excellency," Father Dennis said as he got to his feet. His voice was almost a whisper as he added, "I know now I have loved God too little. I shall try to love Him more."

Father Dennis turned and went slowly out of the room. The bishop, a trace of puzzlement ruffling his disciplined face, watched him go.

15

LATE THAT night, in the deserted warehouse district in the downtown area of the city, two policemen in a cruising car saw a bareheaded young man with a handkerchief around his neck wandering aimlessly along the empty sidewalks.

They were suspicious and drew the car up alongside the curb.

"Looking for somebody, bud?" one of the policemen asked from the car.

The young man came over to the car. His face was deeply troubled. "I am looking for illumination from the Holy Spirit," he said.

The two policemen were going to laugh but they saw his simplicity, his earnestness. They put him down as a mildly deranged, harmless religious crank.

"Don't look for it in any warehouse," the officer said as the car drove off.

Such is the way Matt told it.

"Those were not fanciful words that Father Dennis spoke, and it is understandable why he spoke them," Matt declared. "He, like his Master, was calling in anguish, 'Not my will but Thine be done.' He, too, heart-stricken, was crying out for illumination.

"He had not gone back to the rectory after leaving the bishop's house. Indeed he was never to see the rectory or his pastor again. Nor was he to see the bishop again except once under rather extraordinary circumstances, an event I will tell of presently.

"He wandered the downtown streets the whole night long. Dawn, creeping down the empty, dark ravines of the city, found him still plodding the brick and asphalt floors, bareheaded, tortured, looking for the light he could not find.

"He came to an ancient, once elegant now dilapidated church. He saw a few people, mostly old, going in to five-thirty Mass, a special Mass for those who finished work late or went to work early. The people entered quickly in the shadows, singly and with that curious quality of secrecy that attends people moving in city streets in the early dawn.

"Father Dennis entered the church just as Mass was begun. The altar and chancel were aglow with light. The rest of the church was a deep shadowy dark.

"Father Dennis knelt in the almost black obscurity of the last row of pews. He bowed his head and prayed. He prayed to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. He prayed to God's beautiful Mother. He remembered it was the feast of Ignatius, a saint to whom he had a special devotion since his days with the Jesuits at Georgetown. He prayed to Ignatius.

"Then, suddenly, the illumination came.

"The celebrant had reached the moment of the Consecration of the Host. Christ was about to come down to Earth again. Father Dennis

knelt rigidly upright, his head back. He said the words of the Consecration of the Host along with the priest on the altar . . . *Hoc Est Enim Corpus Meum* . . . for This is My Body. . . .

"Then, in that instant, he received the illumination of the Holy Spirit. Then, in that instant, he knew the tremendous and, in some ways, tragic decision he must make."

Two days later the bishop received a letter, without any return address, signed by Father Dennis.

The letter told of his deep sorrow at his failure as a priest. It told of the tortures of his search for illumination. It told of the moment when at Mass in the ancient church the light finally came to him and, with the light, the knowledge of his decision.

"I saw the truth," Father Dennis wrote, "the almost intolerable truth. I saw why I was irresponsible, and incapable of prudence, and why I failed the priesthood.

"It was because my vocation was not a true vocation. The idea of becoming a priest had come first to me with the idea of offering reparation for my mother's sins. It did not come first out of a desire to save my soul and a love of the service of God.

"The fundamental fact is, Your Excellency, I am not good enough to be a priest. Others, I am sure, are good enough to stand at the altar and command Christ's immolation again. I am not. Others can lift Him up again on His Cross. I cannot. I am not worthy to hold God in my hands.

"Forgive me. I shall see to it I trouble you no more. I realize once a priest, always a priest, and I shall try to act accordingly. Please in your charity remember me in your prayers."

16

Father Dennis' life and wanderings were unknown for the next few months. It was assumed that he got himself odd jobs here and there downtown and became lost in the multitudes of the city.

It is not certain whether his pastor made any effort to find him. It can be imagined neither the pastor nor the parish greatly bemoaned his loss. The bishop, who had been somewhat disturbed at the end of his interview with Father Dennis and by the intense sincerity of his letter, could not get him out of his mind for several days. But soon, in the press

of his own many and grave responsibilities, his concern gave way to the idea that the young curate, being deeply religious, would return, and his problem was vaguely filed away for the future.

Sometime in the late autumn, Father Dennis turned up working in a large downtown bookstore. The store had a sizable religious books department. It was here Father Dennis was stationed. He was remembered as a self-effacing man who was good in the department.

He was not to stay at the bookstore long however. A woman member of his former parish dropped in to the religious books department. She was an ardent reader of Catholic verse and was in to see if anything new had appeared.

She recognized Father Dennis. This was not difficult at this time because he had not yet become stooped and thin from his austerities nor had he grown his beard. She was scandalized.

Straightway she went to the manager. She told the manager his clerk was an "ex-priest" who had had an affair with a woman and had been kicked out of the clergy. The store wouldn't sell many religious books to Catholics, she warned, once the truth about the clerk got around.

"And she warned further," Matt added, "she would see to it the truth got around."

Father Dennis next turned up working at a religious goods store. It was some weeks before Christmas. What happened at the bookstore happened again here. Except this time it was a man doing his Christmas shopping early.

"He was a fine Christian, I'm sure," Matt commented sarcastically, "and a dutiful parishioner. Was he not doing his Christmas shopping, and already abounding in the Christmas spirit?"

Again, apparently, Father Dennis took to wandering the streets. But this time his feet—"his angel," was the way Matt put it—led him to a haven where he was to enjoy some years of happiness and peace.

On Christmas Eve, in the middle of the afternoon, Father Dennis went to visit the chapel of the discalced Carmelite sisters. He had worked out a sort of rule for himself and he wanted to spend his appointed hours of meditation in a church or chapel not overrun with the hurried and the worldly, no matter how devout they might be. He went to the Carmelite convent, to the quiet chapel of contemplatives so he might be at peace.

He knelt in the deeper shadow in the rear of the chapel. The afternoon wore on. Now and then a neighbor dropped in for a visit, knelt a minute or two and departed. The unseen sisters came to their choir and chanted the Divine Office and after that there would be silence. The chant,

reverent to begin with, seemed more reverent sifting from the invisible choristers through the walls into the hushed quiet of the chapel.

Father Dennis felt a great peace, a peace he had not known for a long time. It seemed to him he was at last somehow at home. He was living in a sort of dream, he was sure, and its ending would come with the end of day but while it lasted he drew in deeply every moment of its sublime content.

His beloved St. John of the Cross was much in his mind, as might be expected—St. John, the Carmelite, being the spiritual father of the dedicated contemplatives within the walls.

Dusk crept with its usual delicacy into the chapel. He was alone. Words from St. John of the Cross came to his mind like a whisper. "O sweetest love of God, too little known! He who has found Thee is at rest."

The whisper in his mind sought for utterance aloud. Involuntarily he whispered to the tabernacle, "O sweetest love of God, too little known! He who has found Thee is at rest."

Immediately after he had spoken, he was embarrassed to discover a woman standing just inside the side door of the chapel, looking sharply at him. She was a large buxom woman in her early fifties. One sturdy hand supported an electric floor polishing machine by her side.

"I hope I'm not bothering you," the woman said, "but I have to polish the floors."

Her voice was rather loud and matter-of-fact—too much matter-of-fact, Father Dennis thought, for a chapel with its Divine Mystery.

Straightway the woman plugged in the electric cord in a wall outlet and began to work on the tiled floor. The machine made a din that destroyed the peace of the chapel.

Father Dennis, ill at ease, watched the woman as she pushed the polisher along the front of the church. She worked with a vigor and an efficiency that seemed to him to be irreverent. The front finished, she lifted the heavy machine and pushed on through the altar rail gate into the sanctuary, genuflecting with some difficulty because of her bulk as she came directly before the tabernacle.

There was a moment of quiet as she transferred the electric cord to a wall outlet near the altar. Then the din began again.

Father Dennis grew more ill at ease, partly because he felt he should offer his help to this woman, partly and more strongly because he was unhappy at the profane way she barged around the sanctuary.

He was a shy man and slow to decision but finally he made up his mind. He left his pew and went reverently into the sanctuary, genuflecting humbly and long before the tabernacle.

"Madam," he said in a reverent whisper, "may I help you? May I do the polishing?"

His decision, unimportant though it seemed at the moment, was to change his life.

17

THE ROBUST Mrs. Welsh—she with the floor polisher—was very much in need of help. The convent had no outside sister and Mrs. Welsh, who lived across the street, was its only auxiliary. That evening she had yet to dust the pews. She had yet to arrange the new flowers on the altar for Christmas morning. She had yet to set up the breakfast table in the refectory for the celebrant of the Masses in the morning.

She promptly and gladly turned over the floor polisher to Father Dennis. It was a small chapel and he was soon finished with the floor. He joined Mrs. Welsh at dusting the pews and again he was welcomed. After that he helped her arrange the new flowers. He showed such aptness for the job and such reverence at the altar that she commented on it.

"You're an old hand, I see," she said in the loud, matter-of-fact voice that discomforted Father Dennis. "You've been around an altar before, I can see that."

It was dark when Mrs. Welsh got to setting up the breakfast table.

"Now," she announced, "I must get me an altar boy or a pair of them for the morning. It's no easy task any more getting boys who will get up in the dark. In the old days Christmas Eve was a quiet time and everybody went to bed early so they could be up at the crack of day. Now they stay up and celebrate in the evening—some go to Midnight Mass—and sleep the beautiful Christmas Morning away."

"I'll serve the Masses, ma'am," Father Dennis said.

Mrs. Welsh studied him, saw him wasted and shy. "You sure you can now?"

"I'm sure I can."

"Well, that's a load off an old lady's shoulders!" Mrs. Welsh exclaimed loudly. "I'll be depending on you. There's to be no Midnight Mass this year—too many roisterers used to crash the services—so the first Mass will be at five. Don't be here a moment later than four-thirty."

"Yes, ma'am."

"Are you going home for your supper?"

"No, ma'am."

She studied him again. "You look like a good meal wouldn't do you a bit of harm. I've got an oyster stew on the stove and some homemade rolls warming in the oven. I live just across the way. I might even cut the fruitcake in your honor."

Father Dennis was a little ill at ease. "I don't think I'd better, ma'am."

"Come on, come on," Mrs. Welsh insisted. "You can leave right after supper. I suppose you, like the rest of the world, have Christmas shopping still to do."

"No. I have no Christmas shopping."

"Well, come along then. I won't eat you." She started through the refectory toward the reception hall of the convent. "You'd be doing a person a kindness. It gets kind of lonely being alone on Christmas Eve."

So one thing led to another, as Matt put it, and Father Dennis had supper with Mrs. Welsh.

Mrs. Welsh, a widow of many years, owned a two-story, time-worn, elaborate frame house across from the ancient red-brick convent. When the convent was built, the neighborhood was comfortably suburban, but the city had reached out and the well-to-do had moved on before the advance of the poor. Most houses took in roomers, as did Mrs. Welsh's.

It was part of Father Dennis' new rule that he eat very little, a rule in his poverty he had found easy of observance. That evening at Mrs. Welsh's he ate so little, she became worried about him.

As he was about to leave the house and had opened the front door, snow began to fall. Mrs. Welsh looked out at the wintry night and then at her guest. She saw him in all his wretchedness: thin, in the cheap white shirt and white cotton wash tie he had now begun to wear, hatless, without an overcoat, and the concern she had for him at the supper table grew.

"I better call a taxi," she said. "You'll be soaking to the bone before you've gone a block."

He was alarmed. He had no money to pay for a taxi and no place for the taxi to go. "No, thank you," he said quickly. "I like to walk. I like to walk in the snow especially."

She surmised immediately the reason for his alarm. "Young man, I'll bet you don't have a dime in your pocket!"

He looked at her gravely and said, "I've never had much acquaintance with money, Mrs. Welsh."

"I knew it! I knew it." She was her loud, commanding self again. "You look like death eating crackers! Come. I have a warm room for you and a comfortable bed."

He was disturbed. He had not known kindness for a long time. He tried to protest.

But Mrs. Welsh would have none of his protestation. She was a woman who, once she saw her way, went dead straight ahead. "You have to get up at four o'clock in the morning, young man!" she declared.

So it began.

Father Dennis stayed at Mrs. Welsh's house that night. In the morning he served the Christmas Masses. After breakfast the celebrant told the sister at the turn—the turn being the revolving, half-barrel in the reception room wall through which ordinary communication is maintained with the unseen sisters—that never before had a Mass of his been served so reverently and beautifully.

Later, the sister at the turn talked to Father Dennis. Even the sisters, hidden in the choir, she told him, had been aware of the humility and reverence in his responses at Mass. How they all wished he could serve Mass every morning!

He would try, he said. He would try.

He was happy someone wanted him.

So again one thing led to another. Father Dennis stayed at Mrs. Welsh's Christmas night and served the Mass on St. Stephen's day, the next morning. And the next morning after that. And the morning after that . . .

In a short time Father Dennis was an institution at Carmel. He was acolyte, sacristan, messenger, outside gardener—a beloved factotum.

But to him, taking the name of his favorite saint, he was simply Brother John, janitor. And as Brother John, janitor, he was to find a purpose and peace.

For a time.

18

THE JANITOR job seemed providential and Father Dennis felt that as Brother John he had finally found his station for the rest of his life. The sisters fed him the little he ate, usually only milk or coffee and Carmelite bread, and Mrs. Welsh gave him a room. Both the Carmelites and Mrs. Welsh grew very fond of the janitor and they affected him more than he knew.

The usual Carmelite good humor brought out a latent humor in him and his little quips soon became a source of amusement to the sisters

behind the walls. And their affection for him made his heart often sing with joy.

Mrs. Welsh's loud practicality at first frightened him but, after a while, he began to like it and benefit from it.

Once, Mrs. Welsh, smelling smoke in the middle of the night, got out of bed and made an inspection of the house. She found no fire but she did find Father Dennis out of his room and his bed not slept in. She was much disturbed.

She made coffee and sat up the night in the parlor. At the beginning of daybreak, she heard a door being closed in the monastery across the street. It was Father Dennis coming out of the chapel.

Mrs. Welsh sat Brother Janitor down in the parlor.

"What in glory's name are you doing out moping around at this hour?" she demanded.

"I was just making a visit," he answered meekly.

"Making a visit! Your bed wasn't slept in. This is regular procedure, is it?"

He said nothing.

"Is it?" she asked, "or isn't it?"

"I do go over to the chapel quite often," he admitted.

"Why? Why on earth would you do a thing like that?"

He hesitated and then did not speak.

"Why? Why do you give up your night's sleep? Why?"

He hesitated again but this time he spoke. "I just figured Our Lord might be lonely over there during the long night."

"Glory be! You're going to take care of the Lord, are you?" She was indignant. "The Lord, I promise you, can take care of Himself! And that's more than you can do. Why, you poor creature, you don't eat, you don't go anywhere, and now you don't sleep. You're dying on your feet. You're already getting to be stooped like an old man and you're so thin I wouldn't know you had a face if it wasn't for that stubby beard you're growing.

"Well, I'll tell you one thing, young man. If I'm going to give you a bed, you're going to sleep in it! I'm not going to have you die here on your feet. You hear?"

"Yes, Mrs. Welsh." He smiled, deeply grateful for her solicitude.

But she did not understand his being grateful. "Wipe that smile off your face! I have eyes in my head, haven't I? Your dying is no laughing matter."

"I appreciate your worrying about me, Mrs. Welsh," he said quietly.

"Well, start worrying about yourself a little bit, will you? Don't leave it to me to carry all of the burden." Then she added, looking him

straight in the eyes, "What do you want to be? A good janitor or a bad corpse!"

He was silent a moment. Her last remarks had made an impression on him. "You have a point, Mrs. Welsh."

"Indeed I have. The Lord has given you a job to do. Do it."

"Yes, Mrs. Welsh."

"I noticed yesterday the pews weren't dusted," she said coldly.

He was chagrined. "The pews were dusty?"

"Dusty. Yes. There in the middle where people don't usually sit. Now, I know you're doing this job for nothing. But you're eating and you have a roof over your head and you seem happy, and all that's a lot more than you were before you came here if I know the score.

"Let the Lord take care of Himself, if you want my advice, and you take care of you. I tell you right now you'll be in a wheel chair in a couple of weeks at the rate you're going. Then you won't be doing any job, for free or otherwise."

He nodded slowly. "It would break my heart Mrs. Welsh, if I lost my janitor job."

"Well, get to bed and give up the nonsense. Get on with you. Good morning!"

Father Dennis went obediently to bed. And, so far as Mrs. Welsh knew, in any event, he gave up his middle-of-the-night visits to the chapel.

19

Father Dennis was a little more than three years at Carmel before word of his saintliness got around. The nuns had had an idea from the beginning he was not ordinary, and Mrs. Welsh was sure of it, but no one else. He worked unobtrusively at his many odd jobs and spent such spare hours as he did not spend in the chapel in a small patch of infertile ground which was euphemistically known as the outside garden.

It was the garden that first revealed his uniqueness. There he grew flowers for the chapel altar and it soon was evident his flowers were more beautiful even than those grown in the carefully cultivated gardens in the cloister. He especially grew red roses.

They were roses of the deepest red, large and long-stemmed and graceful. Once, in May, after he had been at Carmel for three years, he brought an armful of the roses to the nun at the turn for the Virgin's statue within the walls.

The little nun, Sister Imelda, exclaimed in rapture as she took the flowers off the turn, "Never, never have I seen roses so red and so beautiful!"

"Those are special roses, Sister," he said. "Saint Thérèse grew them for me."

Truly, the roses Brother John grew were red, deep red. They lasted long and kept the deepness of their color even when wilted. They made blood-red clusters on the altar and before the shrines much to the wonder of the sisters and the faithful. Everyone agreed that never had there been roses so red.

When asked how he grew roses so beautifully red, always he would give the answer he gave Sister Imelda. Saint Thérèse grew the roses for him. Once when Sister Imelda asked him how he was so sure Saint Thérèse grew the roses for him, he said, "I ask her to," as if that were all there was to it. Then he added—and this was the only time he made this comment—"Blood red was a color very dear to Saint Thérèse."

The sisters realized then what they had long before surmised: that their Brother John was someone of importance. They began to turn hopeless petitions and lost causes over to him, saying to the petitioners, "Go and see Brother John. He has more influence than we have."

The number who sought him out grew with the passing of the years. Finally he had to keep a list of the names of the petitioners, and the list became so long that the paper with the list reached to the ground. Always when before the altar, he kept the paper before him and methodically, carefully interceded, one by one, for all.

It was inevitable his accomplishments, sometimes being remarkable ones, were finally called "miracles." The idea he performed miracles profoundly distressed him. Any good thing that happened he attributed to the intercession of his dedicated friends within the walls, the Carmelites. It was also inevitable that he be called a saint. And this, when it happened, embarrassed him so much and hurt his humility so deeply he would keep himself aloof for days.

"In his humility, he felt that this reputation he was achieving was fraudulent," Matt said, "and after eight perfect years at Carmel, he began to be ill at ease. He saw himself simply as a man not good enough to be a priest, and his sole purpose in life was to do penance for what he considered his great sins of imprudence. He loved God with all his heart, and hoped he could save his soul. The idea of his being saintly was incomprehensible and painful to him.

"One spring night, Mrs. Welsh, watching Brother John as he came through the front door with the dark behind him, thought she saw a

sort of luminosity about him. It seemed especially to be around his head and in his face as we observed it that night last autumn here in the café.

"Mrs. Welsh was startled, naturally. She said nothing and kept her excitement to herself. The first thing the next morning she was over in the monastery asking Sister Imelda at the turn if she should believe her eyes.

" 'Of course, my dear,' Sister Imelda whispered as if the report were too marvelous for a normal voice. 'This sort of luminosity is a well-known phenomenon of mysticism. It is not necessarily supernatural but in Brother John's case it may well be. We're all sure he's a saint, if we can call anyone a saint who has not been canonized.'

" 'He's a saint sure enough, canonized or no canonized,' Mrs. Welsh said. 'He changes the world he walks through. After you know him, you're never the same again.'

"Of course," Matt went on, "word of what Mrs. Welsh had seen got around and the more it got around the more it was distorted. People thronged the chapel, especially on weekends, looking for 'the man with the halo.'

"Now for the first time, Father Dennis began to meditate the possibility of leaving Carmel. He had the idea Satan was somehow working for his destruction."

One little incident that happened at this time Matt narrated with more than ordinary emotion. It seems the bishop, visiting the local parish church to administer Confirmation, was told of the holy janitor at Carmel nearby. He decided he would go and see Brother John.

The bishop, with the monsignori and priests in his retinue, six in all, found Father Dennis working in his little garden.

Father Dennis was frightened. He wanted to flee. He was sure he would be recognized.

But the bishop did not recognize his priest, now abnormally thin, stooped and bearded.

Father Dennis, trembling, kissed the episcopal ring and kneeling, asked for the bishop's blessing. The blessing given, the bishop told him he had heard of his piety and asked for prayers.

"I sit in a high place, weak and alone, Brother John," the bishop said humbly. "I need your prayers."

Father Dennis, still trembling, took his roll of paper with its long list of petitioners from his inside pocket. He unrolled it and it reached as usual to the ground. He then fumbled in his outside front pocket until he found a stub of a pencil. At the bottom of the roll, near the edge of the paper, he wrote, "The bishop."

One of the monsignori frowned. "His Excellency's name should be put at the top, Brother."

Brother Janitor hesitated a moment, then he said, "There are many poor people before the bishop on the list, Monsignor, people who are sick and in need and dying. I could not put the bishop first."

The bishop smiled. "As you wish, as you wish."

The bishop and his retinue left.

Father Dennis, watching them go, felt suddenly sorry for the bishop. He took out his roll of paper, scratched the bishop's name from the bottom and wrote it at the top.

The bishop, as his car pulled away, looked back at the stooped, bearded, thin man in the garden. In a voice that trembled slightly, as much from emotion as old age, he said to his retinue, "Would that your bishop or one of his priests were a man like this man here."

20

"IT WAS probably inevitable, Cara or no Cara, with the ever-growing crowds making pilgrimages to see him, some in the quest of miracles, some only out of curiosity, that Brother John would eventually leave Carmel," Matt went on. "But it was Cara who hastened the day.

"Cara came back into his life in the aftermath of one of his miracles or wonders, as I prefer to call them. This was a particularly dramatic one. A girl of the streets—Mary Price was the name she went by—had been stricken with paralysis. It was not polio but a sudden stroke that brought on the paralysis and no doctor—certainly no doctor such as she could afford to see—was certain of its cause or of any course of treatment for a cure.

"On a June afternoon, a sister in the profession, one who had visited Brother Janitor looking for consolation in her frailties, brought Mary to see him, wheeling her there in a wheel chair. The poor creature, to use Mrs. Welsh's expression, was a pathetic sight, no beauty to begin with, she now was ugly in her infirmity.

"Father Dennis laid both hands on her shoulders and prayed over her. At the touch of his hands, she began to tremble from head to foot. A few moments after he had lifted his hands she got out of the wheel chair. She tried to walk. She fell down. Father Dennis and her friend helped her to her feet. She swayed back and forth for a minute. Then she walked."

Matt looked out the window at the growing splendor of the day breaking over the ocean. "Of course, the girl's paralysis was probably psychosomatic. At least that's the way it sounds to me. And the cure may well have come from the tremendous surge of hope and faith the saintly priest inspired. The ailment was psychic and the cure was psychic, I'm sure. Even so, it was still wonderful indeed. But the newspapers heard of it and to them it had to be a 'miracle.' I can't say for sure they weren't right but they certainly were jumping to conclusions.

"That was the beginning of a real problem for Brother John, janitor."

Crowds of men and women, old and young, healthy and ill, overran the chapel and the outside grounds. Many of the ailing came on crutches and in wheel chairs. Father Dennis tried to hide in Mrs. Welsh's house but the pilgrims were at the doors and windows and it was a troubled sanctuary he found there. All who saw him insisted on touching him so his virtue and power would go out to them. Some insisted on embracing him. They plucked buttons off his coat and snipped pieces of cloth from his clothing until he was in tatters.

His peace, his happiness, were ebbing from him. He prayed and he begged the Carmelites to pray that the crowds would diminish and soon desist so he might return to the simplicity of his old life. But the prayers were in vain.

He told the newspaper reporters that if anything unusual had happened, it was the Carmelites' doing, not his, and they should talk to them. He gave them no opinions on his saintliness because in his humility he had none. But they manufactured opinions.

They quoted him at length in words he did not speak. They took pictures of him when he was unware they were doing so and published them with their stories.

"The "Janitor Saint" they named him.

"The Carmelites were perturbed," Matt said. "The bishop was concerned. He issued a statement giving the Church's stand that no phenomenon is miraculous and no man a saint until declared so by the Church. He warned the faithful on hysteria. Father Dennis was distraught, wretched.

"Only Mrs. Welsh was happy. If this was 'a flagrant display of superstition' as a sociologist in a nearby college described it, it wasn't to Mrs. Welsh. To Mrs. Welsh it was faith at work, faith triumphant.

"Father Dennis, despite Mrs. Welsh's enthusiasm, grew more and more miserable. Here were all he loved, here was his home of many rich and happy years, yet he felt in his heart the day might be near when he would have to give all up and go away."

After a moment, Matt, his voice lowered, spoke again. "It was Cara

here, as I have said, who hastened the day of Father Dennis' going."

Cara, unregenerate, still plied her trade but now on a more elegant and prosperous level. She and another girl shared an attractive apartment. They dressed well, lived well and could have been, to all appearances, two sophisticated young ladies living off a moderate inheritance.

Cara's attention was caught by a picture of the Janitor Saint in a newspaper. She read the account of the man's simplicity and saintliness. She returned to the picture. She studied it. Suddenly it occurred to her whose likeness this was.

"She alone recognized in the eyes, in the bearded, drawn face the sanctity she had once known, if only briefly," Matt went on. "It could be she alone remembered his sanctity because, during his short time as a curate, she was the only one who had recognized it.

"She had the gift of her profession of not remembering but she remembered the innocent young priest. She remembered vividly his two visits with her. She remembered them not as any religious experience, for she had had no interest in religion. She remembered them with a physical rapture. She remembered them as times when she was overwhelmingly in love with—and desired—his purity and innocence.

"She had known many men, more men than she could recall, since she had had her meetings with the young priest but he was the only man she really remembered.

"She was sure, looking at the picture, that this was he. The old excitement returned to her. She would go and see him."

21

ON A WARM, June evening, a little before dusk, Cara, her flaxen hair falling richly to her shoulders, her light blue frock and her very high-heeled slippers presenting her physical attractiveness at its fullest, climbed the stairs to Mrs. Welsh's house. She had looked vainly for Brother Janitor at the monastery and had been directed to the house across the street.

Mrs. Welsh answered the doorbell. She was a little startled at the obvious charms of the girl she discovered standing at the door. Cara, she could see, was not one of the distressed, the poor or the ill, not to the ordinary eye certainly.

Brother Janitor, Mrs. Welsh explained, had retired to his room. He was not seeing anybody.

But Cara was not so easily put off. She was more sure of herself now than when years ago she had asked the young curate to come to see her. She was an old friend, she said, of many years' standing. Brother Janitor would want to see her if he knew she was here.

Mrs. Welsh's curiosity was stirred. She ushered Cara into the shadowy parlor and went to call Brother John.

When first Father Dennis entered the parlor, he did not recognize Cara.

"Yes, my dear," he said coming forward.

She smiled in anticipation of his surprise. "I am Cara, Father—the girl in that house you came to visit years ago."

Father Dennis remembered immediately. About all he clearly remembered in the blur of his past were the occasions of his imprudence.

"You recognize me?" He was disturbed.

"Easily, there is only one of you on Earth, Father." Cara looked into his eyes, saw they shone more brightly and more passionately with his sanctity than before. "I would recognize you anytime anywhere," she said with a voice that trembled slightly. "I'm beginning to think I was the only one who really knew you in the old days. I knew you were not like other men."

"You won't tell anyone, will you, my dear?" There was a touch of pleading in his voice. "You won't betray me? I thought you were a friend of more recent years or I wouldn't be here."

"It'll be our secret," she said softly, and she liked the feeling of what she said. Now, she felt, they had a bond between them.

He grew more ill at ease. There was silence as she rested her avid eyes on the thin face that glowed slightly in the shadowy room. By so much as he had mortified himself through the years, by so much as he had sanctified himself, by so much more did she desire him now.

It took resolution on his part to say, "Won't you sit down, my dear?"

She sat down. He sat down across from her. He found he was trembling.

She noticed he was trembling. "You are trembling, Father. So am I. It's the excitement of us seeing each other again after all these years."

"I am unhappy you found me out," he said in a voice a little more than a whisper.

She smiled now. In her command of the situation she could afford to be whimsical. "Don't you want me to become a Catholic?"

"Of course, my dear. Of course," he said with quick intensity. "Haven't you done anything about it?"

"I learned the catechism you left in the house that day. I mean I learned the first three questions. That's one more than you asked me."

"You did? These questions have important answers."

Still smiling, she got to her feet and crossed the room to a chair near him. Her body moved vibrantly with the physical pleasure of the moment.

"I remember them still. So you'll believe me, I'll say them for you. 'Who made me?' 'God made me and lives in me,' she recited in a low throaty voice, a voice hardly tuned to the catechism. 'Who is God?' 'God is Our Father in Heaven.' 'Why did God make me?' 'God made me to know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him in this world so that I may be happy through Him in this life, and with Him forever in Heaven.'" She sat back, pleased. "Was I not a good pupil, Father?"

"Excellent, my dear." His uneasiness left him. "My visit to you long ago was not in vain."

She moved closer to him. Her eyes shone. "I have never forgotten you." Her red sensuous mouth quivered ever so slightly. "I can't."

He was uneasy again. "You should go to see a priest for instructions, my dear. Go to the pastor of your local church."

"I went to see you, Father, after your visit. That's why I learned the three questions. At the church, they told me you were being transferred." Her voice grew in emotion. "I hunted everywhere for you. I must have telephoned twenty churches. I even went to the bishop's office. I couldn't find you. I loved you so much I thought I would die without you."

Father Dennis got to his feet. "Hush, my dear. Hush," he said.

She slowly got to her feet, faced him. "What's wrong with love?" Her passion was in her voice. "I've always wanted love. I took to the life I'm living now because I wanted love. I have never found love. What is wrong if I believe I can find it now? In you?"

"You have God's love, my dear." He was gently understanding now.

"God won't take me in His arms, will He?" She grew more emotional. "He won't kiss me, will He? He won't make love to me, will He? Will He?"

"That kind of love fades and dies, my dear. God's love never dies."

"Couldn't you love me?" She was suddenly direct, realistic.

"I do love you," he said gently.

"You do?" Her eyes widened with her surprise.

"I have not forgotten you since first I saw you," he said quietly. "Your soul is one of the souls I love most in the world. Daily I have prayed for you. Next to my mother's and father's and my own soul, I have prayed to God for your soul. I have always thought of you as an instrument of His Providence." He drew himself up to his full height. His sanctity was a flame in his eyes, his innocence a smile on his lips. "But much as I love you, God loves you more, far more than I ever could. If I had the

strength of a million men and lived a million years, I could never take His place. Good-bye, my dear. Pray. Pray."

He turned and left the room. She, speechless for the moment before his startling sincerity and innocence, watched him go. When she was recovered, Mrs. Welsh was coming into the parlor.

The next evening Cara was back at Mrs. Welsh's house. But the only one there was Mrs. Welsh, forlorn and wretched and red-eyed from weeping. Brother Janitor had gone away during the night.

22

NOW THE DAY had broken fully across ocean and sky. The café was aglitter with light, the first time I had ever seen it so.

"Well, that's about the end of the story of my quest," Matt said. "Mrs. Welsh and Cara, sharing their grief over Brother John's going, became friends.

"Cara, moved by Mrs. Welsh's devotion to the priest, revealed his identity to her. Subsequently, Mrs. Welsh wrote a letter to the bishop and thus it was the bishop learned the truth about Brother John. He kept it very much to himself, however, and it was only in the hope the truth might help me find Father Dennis that he told it to me.

"Cara left her name and address with Mrs. Welsh in the event he should return or write to her. Thus it was I got in touch with Cara and learned her part in the story."

He looked affectionately down at the sleeping girl. "She has the pathos of true beauty, don't you think?"

"She certainly has her charms," I said.

"She came west with me because I persuaded her a change of scene would be good for her," Matt said. "In her heart, though, it's more likely she came in the hope of seeing Father Dennis again."

"Is there such a hope?" I asked. "He seems capable of pretty thorough disappearances."

"Well, Cara found him at Carmel, didn't she?" Matt went on. "We have one hope, a thin hope I'll admit, but a hope. After he left Carmel some two years ago he sent post cards of his wanderings back to the nuns and to Mrs. Welsh. He never gave any address. But the post card would identify the town and city and he would indicate what he was doing. From here he sent a post card of Santa Monica Bay and quipped about his job as a wine steward.

"On his travels, he would visit Carmelite monasteries but in each case, it appeared, the monastery had outside sisters and after a short stay he would move on. In between times, he would work, usually in restaurant kitchens. He wanted, I suppose, a few dollars to enable him to continue his wanderings. That is the reason, I'm sure, he stopped here.

"His real purpose, I think now, is to get as far away from his past as he can. I have an idea we'll find him. Mrs. Welsh is to let me know if she or the nuns get any communication from him. That will give me his town or city. If there is a Carmelite monastery in the neighborhood, we'll know where to go.

"We've got to find him. I have to see him. I need his help.

"I have some real news for him too. His mother has been back looking for him. She is in widow's weeds and pious now. Whether it is merely the piety of a woman growing old I do not know. If it's genuine, it's a miracle by Father Dennis, a miracle of grace. She is rich, but generous to the poor. She gave Father Dennis' monsignor, his former pastor, a large donation for a summer camp for the children of the parish.

"The pastor was quite surprised his irresponsible curate should have so worthy a mother."

Matt got to his feet, stretched vigorously. Cara opened her eyes sleepily, blinked in concern till she saw Matt, then yawned deeply behind her hand.

"You did all right, honey." Matt beamed down at her with evident affection.

She smiled a small smile. "Next time you start talking, darling, I'm going to bed."

Matt grinned. "You'll be in bed all the time."

Matt looked out the window at the radiant morning. An early sailboat made a small white triangle on the rim of the gleaming ocean.

Matt glanced down at his wrist watch. "I think I'll go to Mass in Santa Monica," he said abruptly.

"You?" Cara laughed softly. "You haven't been to church since I've known you."

"Another miracle?" I was amused.

"No," he said. "I just feel I've got to do something about this morning. It's so beautiful."

I could see he was trying to talk away the transformation that had taken place in him.

"And you, Cara," he went on, "you're so beautiful, I've got to do something about you. Say," he said to her as if with a sudden idea, "how about you coming to Mass with me?"

"Me? Not me, darling." She was decisive. "You kiddin'?"

"Just out of curiosity," he urged.

"Nope. Thanks. Not me." She slipped out of the booth. She was taller, I could see now, and even more physically attractive than I had thought. "I'm still sleepy." She yawned again behind her hand and managed to look good doing it. "I'm going up to that room and go to bed."

So Matt went to Mass. Cara went to bed. And I went up to my shack in the mountains. And thus ended the long evening.

23

MATT CAME to the end of his quest sooner than he dreamed.

On a bleak, chill morning, four months less a few days, after he had told Dennis' story in the booth in the café, we, Matt, Cara and I, stood by a simple grave in the potter's field of a northern California city.

A plain metal plate with the single name "Dennis" marked the head of the grave.

It had been raining for several days and the earth of the grassless grave, one of a row of comparatively new paupers' graves, was muddy. The cemetery itself was a desolate wide field bordered by scrubby, brown hills and cheap building developments. None of the beauty that, it seemed to me, should have attended the burial place of such a man was visible so far as the eye could see.

We could not speak for a long minute after we had come upon the grave. Cara was sobbing, her body shaking.

Finally I, seeking for an epitaph, said, "Friendless he died, and alone. The end of a saint."

"No, not friendless, not alone," Matt said, and so deeply moved was he, he could hardly speak. "He died happily in the presence of his greatest friend."

The circumstances of Father Dennis' death had been strange and it was not hard to understand how Matt saw the event as the curtain of a divine drama.

Matt, in the months after his return to his café, had received two post cards from Mrs. Welsh. The first placed Father Dennis in a central California town where Matt found on inquiry there was no Carmelite monastery.

The second, several months later, placed Father Dennis in a northern California city. Matt telephoned long distance to the diocesan chancery.

He found there was a Carmelite monastery in the city. A half hour after the call, Matt, Cara and I were racing north on the Pacific Coast Highway in Matt's powerful automobile.

The monastery was a beautiful place, far different from the monastery where Father Dennis had served as Brother John, janitor. Two beautiful, wrought-iron gates opened on the driveway. A pink stucco wall covered with ivy guarded the privacy of the monastery. Acacia, olive and camphor trees and low-hanging pepper trees adorned the grounds.

The sister at the turn, sounding exactly like the sister in the eastern Carmel, was very kind. There had been a man named Dennis there for a few days. He had come and asked if he might work around the grounds. He was employed as a night dishwasher in the kitchen of a café in the city and he would like now and then to enjoy the sunshine and beauty of Carmel, he said.

Permission was granted him. The monastery had a part-time gardener already and there were two outside sisters and so there was little for the new gardener to do.

The outside sisters, on the few occasions they met with him, found him kind and pleasant. They worried about him. He seemed to be ill as if of some wasting disease.

He was most devout and spent, they observed, most of his time in the chapel.

He had been visiting Carmel for only two weeks when he stopped. For ten days or so nobody saw him.

Then, one early morning, the outside sister who was sacristan, coming into the sanctuary to prepare the altar for morning Mass, found him stretched out on the dark red carpet at the foot of the altar. He was lying prostrate, his head toward the tabernacle, his arms outstretched.

His body was in the form of a cross.

It was an extraordinary sight to her but she was a simple woman and, looking from the sacristy door, she reached a simple explanation.

Mr. Dennis, she decided, had been in the dark of the chapel the night before, unaware of her when she locked the doors. Now, in the morning, he had prostrated himself in extraordinary devotion before the altar, much as a young priest at ordination prostrates himself before the altar.

But when the outside sister went to him and, in her simplicity, called to him, "Mr. Dennis. Mr. Dennis, you must get up," he did not respond or move.

She saw then he was dead.

At the grave, Matt, head bowed, grief-stricken, said again, "No, not friendless and alone. He died happily in the presence of his greatest friend."

Suddenly, Cara, still sobbing, fell to her knees in the mud, careless of her fine dress and fine stockings.

Matt and I, startled, watched her.

After a moment, she began to pray. "'God made me and lives in me,' she sobbed. 'God is Our Father in Heaven. God made me to know Him, to love Him and to serve Him in this world, so that I may be happy through Him in this life and with Him forever in Heaven.'"

She was reciting the three answers from the catechism. It was for her a prayer, the only sort of prayer she knew.

As she sobbed her prayer, Matt looked down on her with great compassion. When she had finished, he raised her gently to her feet.

"Come, honey," he said softly, "Father Dennis is not here."